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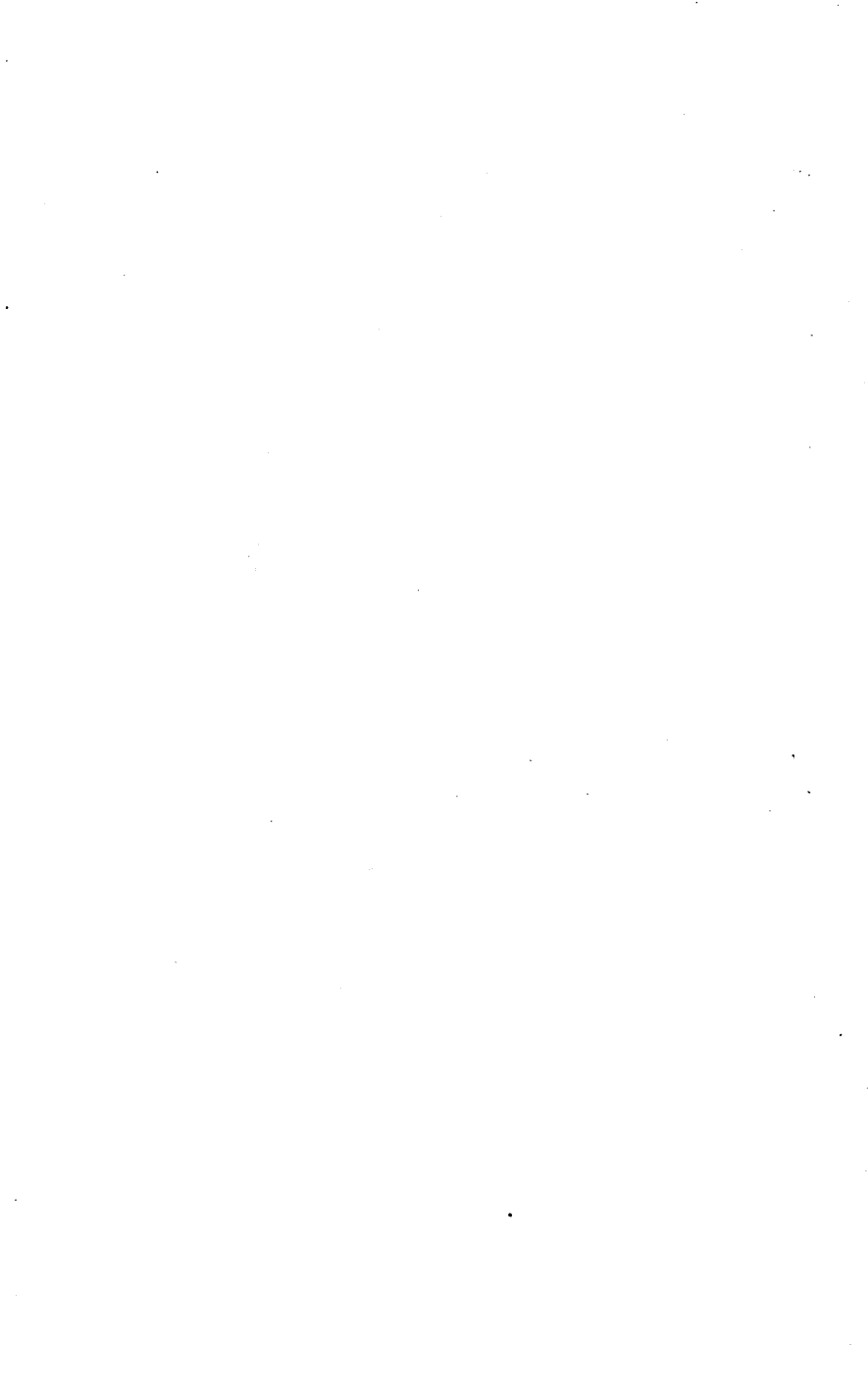
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A Study in New Testament Teaching

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The following pages contain the substance of a series of lectures delivered, on two occasions, to groups of clergy. No thorough attempt has been made to eliminate entirely all trace of the form in which the lectures were originally cast, but it is hoped that evidences of the "spoken word" do not appear with irritating frequency.

V. J. K. B.

CHAPTER I

General Considerations

IF any ordinary man, unprejudiced and untheological, were given a New Testament and asked to pick out the central and pre-eminent truth emphasised by Christ in his teaching about God, there can be little doubt that he would fix on Our Lord's reiterated insistence on the overflowing love of God. There is no need to labour the point. It is God's nature to give good things to those who ask Him—nay more, He maketh His sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, and sendeth the rain on the unjust as well as the just. Man should not worry about food or raiment; God knows that he needs such things, and that is enough. He cares for the commonest birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field in splendour. He is always ready to hear a man's prayer, always ready to welcome with joy the repentant sinner. His whole character towards man, in fact, seems to be summed up in the word Father. It would almost be true to say that the real aim of Christ's teaching about God seems to have been to make men think of Him just as Father; they are to address Him as Father; they are to be generous to their enemies so that they may be worthy sons of their Father. At

least twenty times in St. Matthew's Gospel is God called Father not specifically as Father of Christ, but generally as Father of all men. Only as we think of Him so can we even begin to be in the right relation towards Him.

It is of the first importance, in examining the doctrine of Divine Judgment, to remember this general tone of Our Lord's teaching. For such a conception of God is not what is normally reached by men in their unaided and instinctive searchings after the divine. Apart from the revelation of God's love in Christ, men on the whole tend to think of awful majesty as the most prominent characteristic of deity—a majesty and an awe which practically obscure every other feature and leave humanity trembling and almost at a loss in the presence of God. It is obviously some such idea which lies at the root of Professor Otto's conception of religion as consisting in the apprehension of the divine as purely *mysterium tremendum*, an overwhelming power before which we are as nothing. Probably, on the whole, apart from Christ's life and teaching, that is almost all that man has been able to grasp about God, except for the further intuition that the supreme power is opposed to evil, though evil of course has not always been morally conceived. But Christ, without in the least detracting from the majesty of God has added that other truth of the love of God—a love which is not inconsis-

tent with majesty and power, but is indeed only possible, in all its minute care and unruffled patience, on the basis of complete majesty and complete power.

What it was in the teaching of Christ which made the common people hear Him gladly, and the world accept so readily the Gospel which His Apostles preached is largely a matter of conjecture. But it is at least probable that it was just His preaching of the love of God which was the attractive feature of the good news. Among the Gentiles of that day, at least, the usual attitude of those who believed in the supernatural at all was one of fear—almost of terror. There was a growing dread of unseen supernatural powers hostile to man, ever plotting to get him into their grip—the principalities, the powers, the world rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places to which St. Paul refers (Eph. vi, 12). There was a growing dread of death and of what should happen to man thereafter. The altar in Athens to the Unknown God was no doubt meant as a precaution—to appease any supernatural being who was not propitiated in the ordinary course of sacrifice. St. Paul was listened to in Athens because he seemed to be a setter forth of strange Gods—perhaps he really did know about Gods of whom the Athenians were ignorant and of whom it behoved them to know. The whole attraction of the

rapidly spreading Mystery religions was their offer of salvation, of safety hereafter, by purifications and mystic formulæ and the power of winning the friendship of some divine being. The heathen world was afraid: what a tremendous relief it must have been to be told boldly by the Christian preachers that God is love and that in Him is no darkness at all. Small wonder they welcomed the Gospel.

Of the Jews it is more difficult to speak; but, even to them, at least to the ignorant and uneducated, the teaching of the overpowering love of God must have come as a revelation. Beyond all question, there is in the Old Testament much about the love of God. An obvious instance is *Exod.* xxxiv, 6, 7, "The Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." There is, too, *Hosea* with his constant teaching of God's love for Israel; and many of the psalms show a deep-felt reliance on the care of God for the individual. Sometimes, in the extra-canonical books (e.g. *Tobit* xiii, 4, *Ecclesiasticus* v, 5, xvi, 26) He is even called Father. But when all allowance has been made for such passages, there still remains in the Jewish writing a great deal to be set against them of the idea of God as Judge administering to mankind at large simply even-handed justice, or even as taking vengeance on sinners. There is, for ex-

ample, the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel with its emphasis on the exact justice of God : He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, it is true, but all that men can expect from Him is simply the reward or punishment their lives have deserved—there is no pity or mercy. Even the great text just quoted from Exodus is followed by the words “that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children.” The book of Wisdom emphatically insists on God’s justice : (vi, 3-8) “The sovereign Lord of all will not regard any man’s person . . . but strict is the scrutiny that cometh upon the powerful.” The leading idea of the book of Jubilees is expressed in xxi, 5—“God is righteous and executeth judgment on all those who transgress His commandments.” And how at least some Jews conceived this exact justice of God may be seen in II Macc. ix, 5, 6, where, when Antiochus is seized with incurable pain in the bowels, the writer’s comment is “and that most justly, for he had tormented other men’s bowels with many and strange sufferings.” It is difficult to think of such an administrator of strict justice in terms of Fatherhood. And there was much else in contemporary Jewish religion which must have tended to exclude, or at least darken, the apprehension of God as Father. All the magnificent ritual, so impressive to the popular mind, must have

emphasised inevitably the remoteness, the "*mysterium*" of God. The minute requirements of the Law, and the emphasis on their exact fulfilment, cannot have failed to put forward in the popular mind the idea of God as Judge administering the Law. The ceremony of the day of Atonement, whatever its inner and original significance, and the remote sanctity of the Holy of Holies, put in a graphic form which no one could mistake the awful and almost cold purity of Jehovah.

Thus, by our Lord's day, in Jewish writings and customs, there already appear side by side those notions of God as Father and God as righteous Judge which Christian theology has found so hard to reconcile. It is futile to try to cut the knot by refusing to acknowledge the presence of either notion. Sometimes, possibly, a temporary reconciliation, perhaps sub-conscious, was made by regarding God's love as directed to Israel, His righteous judgment as fulfilling itself in vengeance on the nations. But that is not very prominently so, even if it is so at all. We can only be sure that we are true to the facts if we admit the presence of both ideas. But it can also be added with truth that it was the idea of His justice which was much the most prominent, at least in the popular mind. That is the idea which seems to underlie the Jewish conception of the Law and which is dominant in most of the widespread apocalyptic literature of the age.

There the emphasis is undoubtedly on the coming vengeance of God on His enemies—whether foreign nations or apostate Jews—a vengeance no doubt just, and yet so terrible that even the angels are represented in one place as shrinking from it, though they dare not intercede with God on behalf of those who are to suffer. For in Enoch lxviii, 2, Michael says to Raphael “The power of the spirit transports me and makes me to tremble because of the severity of the judgment . . . of the angels, . . . Who is he whose heart is not softened concerning it and whose reins are not troubled by this word of judgment?” But he adds “I will not take their part under the eye of the Lord; for the Lord of spirits has been angry with them.” And the idea of angels who intercede for men before God is not uncommon (Test. Levi iii, 5; Test. Dan. vi, 1, 2. Cf. Apoc. Mos. xxvii, 4, 5.) The angels in fact are thought of as more pitiful than God. Probably, as Professor Toy sums the matter up, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, though “not unfamiliar in religiously cultivated circles”, was certainly not yet “the possession of the world”. (“Judaism and Christianity,” p. 84.)

Thus, in all probability, to the majority of the Jews as well as to the Gentiles, Christ’s teaching of the Fatherhood of God must have been a new revelation. Although there had not been wanting previous dim graspings of the doctrine, they had

been overshadowed by other conceptions of God. In the teaching of Christ, to say the least, the respective position of the two ideas is changed. As a recent writer has put it, "Nowhere does Jesus bid his hearers offer the Temple sacrifices to win acceptance with God, and nowhere does He speak of God as requiring propitiation." God's "fatherly authority is royal in its dignity, but it has none of the features of an Oriental despotism, which can be approached only with gifts and flattery and servile deprecation of wrath."¹ In the teaching of Christ, it is Fatherhood which is God's most outstanding characteristic, and the truth of that Fatherhood is no longer confined to a select circle but is blazed abroad for all the world to know.

If we are to understand the teaching of the New Testament about divine judgment, still more if we are to understand the teaching of Christ Himself, it is vital to remember how new His doctrine of the Fatherhood of God must have seemed to many of His hearers. He spoke to men whose minds were not, so to speak, a blank concerning God, but who had very definite ideas of Him as a being of awful justice who would, no doubt, reward the good but who would also take vengeance on the evil, the vast majority of the human race. One must be prepared, in view of that, to allow the possibility that those preconceived ideas may have modified

¹Pace, "Ideas of God in Israel," p. 31.

the record of the teaching of Christ as we have received it in the New Testament. We are all of us to some extent conservative of our thoughts, not willing to make a sudden change and start again *de novo*. Even when we have welcomed a new truth, we are reluctant to abandon a long cherished belief, though we could recognise it to be inconsistent with the new truth were we to look at the two honestly. It is therefore foolish to close one's eyes to the fact that Christ's hearers had deep-rooted ideas about God which may have coloured the record, not in any deliberate or dishonest way but quite unconsciously. Indeed we have definite proof that such a process did take place, if not actually with regard to the Judgment at any rate in another and kindred respect. In the "Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem" Canon Streeter demonstrates this beyond question. By a careful consideration of parallel passages he shows that there was a tendency to increase, to emphasise, and to make more definite the apocalyptic element in Christ's teaching. One example, taken from his essay, must suffice. In parallel passages in Matthew (x, 33) and Luke (xii, 9) occurs the saying that whosoever denies Christ before men shall be denied before God. That is probably the Q version, the earliest. The same saying, roughly, is to be found in Mark viii, 38, where however it is expanded by the phrase "when He cometh in the glory of

His Father with the holy angels." That is probably a later version of the same saying, but now an explicit reference to the Second Coming has crept in. In Matthew's parallel to Mark (Mt. xvi, 27) the original point of the saying is completely omitted, and all that is left is an emphasised form of Mark's apocalyptic element, coupled with a general assertion of judgment—"For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render to every man according to his deeds." Now those passages show the perfectly natural way in which, in course of time, the very strong expectation among the early Christians of a speedy Second Coming did tend, quite unconsciously, to impress itself on the record of Our Lord's words. The same sort of thing may also have happened in places where we can no longer check the records. And, as it occurred in the matter of Messianic expectation so strongly expressed in Jewish writings, it may with equal ease have taken place in the teaching about divine judgment which was also deeply rooted in Judaism. What Christ said on the subject may have been hardened, coloured, made more emphatic.

But it may be asked, Is there any need to make such a supposition? Is there, at any rate in the Synoptic teaching, anything about divine judgment which seems incompatible with Christ's teaching of the love of God, anything which looks Jewish

rather than Christian? Such questions raise a point of fundamental significance. There are many nowadays who appear to think that the love of God is incompatible with any kind of divine judgment or punishment: that God's love is such that His only purpose is to save His creatures pain. I cannot personally accept such a view of the divine love, simply because it seems to me not to be the highest form of love. It is too soft, too short-sighted, too sentimental. But the highest love is bracing, astringent, always aiming at the greatest and permanent good of the beloved, ready to inflict discipline and remedial punishment, if it is necessary to the attainment of that highest good. It is not the wisest or most truly loving parent who refuses to take a child to a dentist for fear of immediate pain. It is not the most truly loving parent who refuses to discipline his child with punishment because he cannot bear inflicting anything unpleasant on the object of his love. And if God is truly our loving Father, it seems to be inevitable that, when we are wayward or wicked, punishment and discipline should be a normal means to our reform. That is not inconsistent with the love of God; it is, or may be, the very expression of a love which simply seeks what is best for us.

But it is also true that if God is complete love, one would expect such pains and penalties as He may inflict to be directed to one sole end—the bet-

terment of those who receive them. In a word, remedial punishment alone would appear to be compatible with essential Fatherhood. That, at least, is the lesson which conscience teaches to those of us who are parents. Sometimes in actual fact we do punish in anger or merely in nervous irritation, for self-protection. But in our calmer moments we are always aware that such punishment falls short of true fatherliness. In so far as we are loyal to our trust as parents we know that the only proper motive in punishment should be solely the betterment of the child who is punished, not our own protection or satisfaction. It is often urged, of course, that another and proper motive for punishment may be found in the vindication of the moral law. That is what, on the surface, seems to be the justification of our Law Courts. But its propriety in the parental sphere is very questionable. This does not mean that the moral law ought not to be vindicated and upheld; rather that the best way in which it can be upheld is not by mere "eye for eye" punishment, but by winning people to observe it, preferably because they can see its excellence. It may be, at times, that punishment alone will effect such observance; and in that case punishment surely is both right and the expression of true fatherliness. Such punishment however is at bottom remedial or reformatory, not retributive. But suppose the case of an obstinate and self-willed

child who has told a lie. If he is punished it may "put his back up" and provoke him through mere bravado to further falsehood; if he is unpunished but his fault explained to him he may be ashamed and not repeat the offence. Who will doubt which is the better and more fatherly course, supposing the consequence in each case to be what has been described? It is true that the moral law has been flouted; but surely it is vindicated more truly by that method which will lead to its observance in future than by a method which, although it exacts tit for tat, yet results in further breaches of it. Punishment aimed at reform—remedial punishment—is the true expression of love: retributive punishment, tit for tat, is not. It is extraordinarily difficult to see how the latter can be reconciled, as attributed to God, with Christ's teaching of Fatherly love.

The whole idea of retributive punishment, in fact, belongs to the law court rather than to family life. In practical everyday life the majesty of the law must be upheld, else there would, we imagine, be stark confusion. If the convicted thief is not punished others will steal. That is how we justify our legal procedures. But it should be observed that, even there, the motive is really, ultimately, not the vindication of the law in the abstract but the endeavour to induce men to keep it,—both the criminal himself and the large number of potential

criminals whose eyes are turned to the trial. It may be, in the case of a particular offender, that what would reform him would be not punishment but forgiveness. Such a method, however, we cannot afford to adopt because of the world outside. If it were not for that, few of us would agree that the moral law demanded punishment when forgiveness would be a better means to reform. But human justice is rough and ready, and we cannot isolate the wrongdoer and treat him so to speak *in vacuo*, without regard to his fellows. That fact is what we vaguely cover with the grandiose title of "vindicating the moral law": that is why we consider it to be the function of a judge to mete out a punishment adequate to the offence. But the cause of true righteousness would be better served, so far as the offender is concerned, if we could direct our treatment of him solely to his reform. That we cannot do so is due to our human limitations.

But it is difficult to suppose that God is thus limited in His dealings with us, at least ultimately. May be, for the present when we are in the mass, an individual may be punished for the sake of his fellows, as an example. But if the teaching of Christ means anything,—if God does really search for the one lost sheep of the hundred and shower His favours even on the wicked—then it is hard to suppose that ultimately the true interest of an individual will have to be sacrificed for the benefit of

the majority. It is hard to believe that God will not be able to devise a means which will suit both him and them and lead to the true vindication of the moral law by its cordial acceptance and observance by all. And whatever that means may be, whether forgiveness or punishment, we should expect that it would be the outcome of fundamental love. One thing, if Christ spoke truth, His method can hardly be—vindictive, God revenging Himself on His enemies. And it is difficult even to suppose that it will be retributive, merely directed to the upholding of the moral law. If there is divine punishment, it will surely be remedial; in such, there is no contradiction either of the fatherly love of God or of His real support of the ultimate value of morality in its widest sense.

If that is true, it may perhaps be allowed to add in parenthesis one further observation. It is a mistake that we so glibly refer to God as judge. Christ himself, it is interesting to note, never uses the word of God, which is surely a significant fact. Assuredly, our use of it is liable to promote misunderstanding. At the back of such language, of course, lies the important truth that God may, in fatherly love, mete out remedial punishments to the wrong-doer. But that is scarcely what the word "judge" suggests by itself in common speech. There is little show of fatherly love in the ordinary judge in his official capacity. The very essence of his

office seems to be cold impartiality, a sort of impersonal quality which regards deeds rather than motives and which can take small account of personalities. Such an impression of judges may be wrong; one suspects, with satisfaction, that there is really much more of the milk of human kindness in them than such a description suggests. But still, even if wrong, it is the impression which the word conjures up in most men's minds. We shall do well therefore to be chary of applying it to God: for on the face of it at least it does seem to be opposed to Our Lord's picture of God as heavenly Father.

CHAPTER II

The Synoptic Gospels

SO far an attempt has been made to suggest what can be deduced *a priori* as to the bearing of Christ's general teaching about the love of God on the particular subject of divine justice. When we turn to the detailed teaching of Christ as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, we find that a good deal of it is in the form of Parables, and it is, of course, very arguable to what extent the details of the Parables are to be pressed. There will no doubt be differences of opinion on the point: it is mentioned here to show that it has not been overlooked.

One thing is perfectly plain—that Christ did warn his hearers of a judgment or testing time to be faced. You cannot get rid of it from any of the three Synoptic Gospels without hopelessly mutilating the text: it is woven into the very fabric of His teaching in all the accounts we have of it. There are nowadays some who wish to reject belief in the Divine Judgment either because it seems to them incompatible with the love of God, or because there seems to be no evidence in the world in which we live that God does punish the evil and reward the good. But such critics will find no support in the

gospels for their views. Plainly, to Christ, some form of judgment did appear consonant with divine Fatherhood, while the Parable of the Wheat and Tares seems to be directed exactly to meeting the doubts of those who are puzzled by the non-destruction at the moment of the wicked. That fact must not be interpreted, Christ teaches, to mean that God is indifferent or powerless, but simply that He is withholding His hand. The Beatitudes and, in St. Luke, the Woes point the same lesson—that we must not suppose the present fate of men to be God's final word.

There is, then, to be divine judgment. What is the purpose or object of it? Is it to be God's effort as Judge to vindicate the moral law, or is it to be rather of a Fatherly, disciplinary and remedial character? The latter is what, *a priori*, we should expect, and there is a great deal more in the teaching of Christ to support such a belief than we sometimes remember. His insistence at the outset on repentance, and His frequent forgiveness of the repentant, suggest that repentance is enough to secure forgiveness, without any necessity of satisfying the injured majesty of the law. If a man is truly repentant, he is in fact not the man who sinned but a changed man, and therefore is not treated as a sinner. It is the condition or treatment of the man as he is which is considered, not the maintenance of an abstract balance of right and wrong. In

the same way, towards the end of His life, there are frequent injunctions to "watch": it is suggested that if from now onwards men will do their best, all will be well with them, and it is, surely, implied that the past need not be regarded. Once more, the scales of strict justice—tit for tat—are left out of the picture. The same neglect of exact justice comes out very strongly in the parable of the Prodigal Son (who, most of us would say, plainly ought to have been punished) and in the parable of the Labourers who each received a penny for very various periods of toil. In both cases it is the men who seem to be considered,—the sorrow of the prodigal, the equal readiness of all the labourers to work—rather than their deeds. Not abstract justice is the criterion of treatment, but what will be best for the individuals concerned.

On the other hand there is very little to suggest the other point of view, that the object of divine judgment is to maintain the standard of abstract justice. Of course, there are the many places in which apparently destruction of sinners is indicated—which does not look disciplinary. They will be considered presently in another connection. Here it is sufficient to say that most of them suggest that the evil are destroyed not in the least to vindicate moral law, but simply because they are worthless and fruitless; nothing can be made of them so they are better out of the way, like tares or an

unfruitful tree. There are in fact only two sayings which suggest that the aim of divine judgment is simply penal. There is the saying, in both Matthew and Luke (xi, 50)—and therefore Q—that the blood of all the prophets was to be demanded of that generation, and the saying, peculiar to Matthew (xii, 36) that men shall give an account in the day of judgment of every idle word. Now Matthew is notoriously the most Jewish in tone of the Gospels. Far more than the other two synoptists this writer emphasises the apocalyptic element in Our Lord's teaching; and it is not unfair to say the same of the teaching about judgment. For example, the phrase "there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" is to be found six times in Matthew, only once in Luke, not at all in Mark. It looks as though "Matthew" wished to stress the terrors of the judgment: and we shall have other instances to show a tendency in him to dwell on the judgment teaching, and to heighten it. In view of that tendency, we cannot lay great stress on the isolated saying, peculiar to him, about the giving account for every idle word, with its suggestion of a charge-sheet in the heavenly court. All that is left is the saying about the blood of the prophets, —which surely is only to be understood as meaning that Christ's hearers were simply repeating the sins of their ancestors, not that they were responsible for them.

The evidence thus suggests that there is no adequate ground in the teaching of Our Lord for the idea that the judgment of God is in the interests of abstract justice, and much to lead one to suppose that it is simply fatherly and remedial. That it is the wrongdoer who will be considered rather than merely the wrong that he has done is also indicated by the fact that men are to be judged, as we say, according to their lights. "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged and with what measure ye measure it shall be measured to you" (Mt. vii, 2—the last half also is in different places both in Mark and Luke: it looks as though it had been in Q as well as in Mark). The same idea of a standard varying with the individual case comes out also in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt. xviii, 23). At first his Lord forgave him, but when he was not himself merciful, the treatment changed and he was punished. The same is also indicated in Lk. xii, 47, 48—"That servant which knew his lord's will and made not ready . . . shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes." The majesty of the absolute moral law is not regarded: punishment is fitted to the individual circumstances. God is to be conceived therefore as acting in the capacity, not of a mere judge, but of a Father who aims at the betterment of His Sons, making allowance for their

ignorance and dealing with them on the basis of what they are, not of what they have done.

Such seems to be the spirit of the judgment, leaving aside for the moment such passages as suggest destruction. What is the method of it? Does it consist in the positive infliction of pains and penalties or in the mere withholding of good? The evidence suggests that Christ taught that both methods are to be employed, but there is a good deal more than we usually remember to point to the frequent use of the latter, the mere refusal of rewards. That, of course, entirely fits in with the general picture of the Fatherhood of God. In the human sphere it is a very short-sighted parent who gives a reward to his children when they have definitely failed to fulfil the conditions on which it was offered. To do so is mere indulgence and not in the best interests of the child. A wise parent does not do it, and we could hardly expect that God should act so: it argues no defect in His love if He does not. And there is a great deal to suggest that one method employed by God is simply this withholding of reward. Thus Mt. v, 19, 20 "Whosoever shall break one of these commandments and teach men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" . . . and "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven". There is no positive penalty there, but merely the withhold-

ing of a high, or in worse case of any, part in the Kingdom. Again those who claim to have known Christ, but have not carried out His will are bidden "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity"—a saying from Q, for it is in both Matthew (vii, 23) and Luke (xiii, 27). Their punishment is to be the mere loss of the presence of Christ, not an added punishment, though it is in this context in Luke that there occurs his only use of the phrase "there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth". But it is interesting to note how it is used here; the weeping is to be due not to positive pains inflicted, but to disappointment and chagrin because those who are sent away see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and themselves are cast out (Lk. xiii, 28). There is a similar passage to this last in Mt. viii, 12, where many are said to come from the East and the West to sit with Abraham while the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness where shall be "the weeping and the gnashing of teeth". St. Matthew, by the turn he has given to the words, suggests inflicted torment, but probably that is due to his editing and the Lucan version is more original; it is the exclusion (which Matthew does carefully note) that is the essence of the punishment, while the intrusion of the idea of actual torture is simply due to Matthew's preconceived Jewish ideas of the Judgment.

In many other places this idea of exclusion from the Kingdom, or from the friendship of Christ, is quite clear. There is the passage from Q, already referred to (Mt. x, 32) which says that Christ will confess before the Father those who confess Him before men and deny those who do not. The same is again expressed in Mk. viii, 38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father". There is no mention of actual punishment here—merely exclusion or denial: and Luke in the parallel passage (ix, 26) simply keeps the Marcan saying. Matthew, characteristically, has substituted a definite idea of rewards and punishments—"then shall He render to every man according to his deeds". In the Lucan parable of the Pounds (Lk. xix) the servant who has not traded profitably is left alone—the talent he has wasted is taken from him, and he is not given honourable charge over cities: but that is all. In the Matthaean version of the same story (The Talents, xxv, 30), again characteristically, there is positive punishment as well—"cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth". Again in the parable of the Feast, in Luke it is apparently enough that the unwilling guests miss the feast that is provided for them: it is only Matthew which says that the King

“sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned their city”—an obvious reference, in the Jewish Gospel, to the fate which would overtake the city which had ill-treated God’s messengers, the Prophets. Finally in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the foolish are simply left outside.

There is thus a great deal to suggest that one of God’s ways of dealing with sinners is the mere withholding of reward. It is to be found in all three synoptists—indeed the Ten Virgins is peculiar to Matthew—but there seems also to be a tendency in Matthew not to regard mere non-reward as enough: in several passages where the other gospels seem to indicate mere exclusion, the first gospel has a notice of positive punishment as well. I do not wish to suggest that there are not many sayings of Our Lord which do in fact suggest such an idea: there are, and I am just coming to them. But Matthew almost appears to wish to multiply their number.

To come now to such sayings as suggest inflicted punishment, there is first of all the series of sayings in Mk. ix, 43, that it is better to enter into life maimed or lame or blind than to be cast into Gehenna with two hands or feet or eyes—a saying reproduced by Matthew (xviii, 8, 9) with the substitution in one place of “aeonian fire” for “Gehenna”. Plainly such sayings do suggest that Jesus did believe in—or at any rate did not wish

to destroy in his hearers belief in—a place of actual inflicted punishment. There is also the description of God in Luke (xii, 5) as He “who hath power to cast into Gehenna,”—a Q saying possibly, for it is also in Mt. x, 28, in a not very different form. So that in both Mark and Q we seem to have evidence that Our Lord accepted the doctrine of a place of punishment. It is, perhaps, characteristic of Matthew, however, that whereas Luke and Mark each refer to Gehenna only in one passage Matthew speaks of it a good deal more often—the man who calls his brother fool shall be in danger of the hell of fire (v, 22); to the Pharisees it is said (xxiii, 33) “how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna”; and although he has the warning about going whole into Gehenna in the Marcan context, he also has what is practically a repetition of it in the Sermon on the Mount (v, 29, 30).

There is also the suggestion of active measures of punishment, without mention of Gehenna, in other places both in Mark and Luke. It is to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. x, 12) and for Tyre and Sidon (Lk. x, 14) in the day of judgment than for the present hearers—probably Q sayings, for there are parallels in Matthew. No doubt they are references to the Messianic Woes at the Second Coming; but they still imply positive divine punishment on sinners, as do the Woes depicted in Lk. xvii, where it is implied that destruc-

tion shall be as in the days of Noah and of Lot. There is also, peculiar to Luke, the saying about the unworthy servants being beaten with stripes (Lk. xii, 47)—though Matthew has what is perhaps a shorter version of it. It is Luke alone who gives the parable of Dives and Lazarus, with its picture of Dives in torments; Luke alone who says that unless men repent they will be destroyed as the Galileans whose blood Herod mixed with their sacrifices (xiii, 3) or those on whom the tower in Siloam fell (xiii, 5); Luke alone, in the parable of the Pounds, relates that the king destroyed those who did not wish him to rule over them; Luke alone records the saying to the weeping daughters of Jerusalem (xxiii, 24) about the terrible days to come. There is, then, much in Luke to suggest active divine punitive intervention. There is also something in Mark, besides the Gehenna passage; the wicked husbandmen are to be destroyed (xii, 9) and the Messianic Woes are recorded in xiii (though there are of course doubts about the origin of this chapter). Thus, both Mark and Luke do show signs of belief in active divine punishment. But by far the most striking teaching on this matter comes in Matthew. Peculiar to him are the parables of the Tares and the Drag-net (xiii, 30, 47) and of the Unforgiving Servant (xviii, 23) and of the man without a wedding garment, and of the Sheep and the Goats (xxv, 31) where the Goats are

sent to "aeonian punishment". He has also, along with Mark and Luke, the destruction of the wicked husbandmen; and, with Luke, the destruction of the Unfruitful Tree (Mt. vii, 9, cf. Lk. xiii, 7). Thus in St. Matthew this view of divine punishment is really given much more prominence and emphasis than in the other synoptics. In Luke it is very often almost incidental; it is not the point in the story of Dives and Lazarus nor in the parable of the Pounds: but it *is* the point in the very telling parables of the Tares and the Drag-net, the Sheep and the Goats, and the Wedding Garment. One cannot help thinking that in Matthew, even if it be allowed that all these parables are genuine utterances of our Lord, yet a disproportionate emphasis is given to them. The writer appears to have liked to dwell on this theme rather than on others to a greater extent than Christ, if the teaching of Christ recorded by Mark and Luke is correct in its proportions.

Now what is to be said of all this teaching about active divine punishment, present in all three synoptics in greater or less degree? Of course, it is entirely compatible with Fatherhood if it is merely disciplinary, as much of it may very well be thought to be. But it is at first sight difficult to see how destruction can be disciplinary. That, however, is a point which needs further consideration. If "destruction" is to be taken literally then it is not

endless punishment without hope of reform, (i.e., retributive punishment), but simply annihilation. If that is what is meant—though few Christians have taken it so—then it merely indicates the action of God to destroy those who are literally beyond possibility of reform: which in fact is the kindest fate for them if they really are hopeless. If it does *not* mean that, but is merely an emphatic term for punishment, then it does not exclude the possibility that it is disciplinary punishment. Either of those two interpretations of “destruction” is possible, and either is compatible with Fatherly love. The one interpretation that seems to be quite arbitrary and quite incompatible with Fatherly love is that “destruction” is to be taken to mean literally eternal punishment. In so far as the writers of the synoptics suggest that—and it is chiefly St. Matthew who does—probably their preconceived notions of God as Judge have led them to misinterpret sayings of Christ which referred either to complete destruction or to reformative punishment.

But we cannot leave the matter there. Either mere destruction or reformative punishment is compatible with Fatherly love: so far as I can see, eternal punishment is not: for if the punishment is to go on for ever, it is implied that it will not in fact work reform. It appears to be not reformatory but retributive and almost vindictive. There are a few

sayings in the gospels which do suggest this and at which we must look rather carefully. It may be thought that in what follows the strict letter is pressed too much. But here it is perfectly fair to press the letter, because the writers, with their preconceived notions of judgment, are not likely to have toned down what Our Lord said, but rather the contrary. If therefore we take the sayings exactly, we may be sure that we have got the extreme of our Lord's teaching.

It is important to remember that although Christ apparently recognised Gehenna as a place of punishment and even spoke of God as having power to send men there (Q), it is not in fact usually said by Him that men are to be there for ever, although Mark speaks of the fire as unquenchable. In Luke, Our Lord never mentions "eternal punishment", and the only mention of Gehenna is in the saying that God has the power to send men there. In Mark, again, eternal punishment is not mentioned, and the only suggestion that men may be for ever in Gehenna is in ix, 48 "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched". This, however, may not be pressed: it is simply an adaptation of the last verse in Isaiah, which mentions together unquenchable fire and the worm that shall not die. Thus neither in Mark nor in Luke does Christ certainly teach eternal punishment: in Matthew alone of the synoptists is such teaching to be

found,—in xxv, 46, where the Goats are sent to “eternal punishment”. But in view of Matthew’s clearly marked tendency to stress the whole doctrine of divine punishment, we cannot put very much weight on this isolated saying—even if αἰώνιος does mean “eternal” in our sense.

There are, however, one or two passages elsewhere which, on the face of them, suggest vindictive action on the part of God. There is the saying about vengeance for the blood of the prophets, already considered, which can hardly mean more than that the Jews of Our Lord’s day were repeating the sins of their forebears. But the king, in Luke xix, 12, who slew those who did not wish him to reign over them; the king in Mt. xxii, who slew those who would not come to the marriage feast; the slaying of the wicked husbandmen—all these seem to suggest vengeance. They are all of them, however, quite clearly references, not thickly veiled, to the Messianic Woes which, it seems, many Jews believed would precede the Kingdom. As such, they need not be considered in detail. For terrible as those Woes were generally expected to be—and indeed are represented in the Gospels as being—they were expected to be not permanent but transitory. There is no suggestion of eternal punishment in them, nor necessarily of vindictiveness: they may very well be regarded as disciplinary, and the note of vindictiveness is largely read into them from hu-

man preconceptions. Mark xiii, 19, indeed definitely says that the Lord had shortened the duration of the times of tribulation.

There only remains, under this head of suggestion of vengeance on the part of God, the saying about the unforgivable sin, the blasphemy against the spirit. Does that imply harshness on the part of God, a judgeship on the human model? Two points are worthy of note. First of all there is the preceding saying—that all other sins can be forgiven—which does not suggest divine vengeance; and secondly the saying was contained in slightly different forms, apparently, in Mark and Q, of which Matthew typically keeps both, though hardening Mark. In Mk. iii, 29, it is said that he who blasphemes against the spirit “hath not forgiveness for the aeon but is guilty of an aeonian sin”. I do not think that means eternal unforgivableness, but simply what it says—that for the present aeon or age it shall not be forgiven. Clearly that was what the writer of Matthew understood the words to mean, for he changes Mark’s version into “it shall not be forgiven him in this age nor in the age to come” (xii, 32), that is, the Messianic age. In view of that, we may surely say that the Marcan version implied the ultimate possibility of forgiveness, but not in this life. The Q version (Lk. xii, 10: Mt. xii, 31) is simply that such a sin shall not be forgiven. Which version is original we can hardly say.

That in Mark is more in accord with the general teaching of Christ—but if the Q version is preferred, let it be observed that it does not mention eternal punishment and is equally compatible with the doctrine of annihilation.

It remains that a few words should be said as to the time and process of judgment. The traditional idea among Christians has been of a Great Assize at the end of the world: but there are passages in the gospels which suggest immediate and individual treatment. Lazarus and Dives are represented as already rewarded and punished respectively; the repentant thief is to pass at once to Paradise; and, if they stood alone, such sayings as “it is better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to depart into Gehenna” would most naturally suggest immediate judgment. But the vast majority of sayings seems rather to point to a Great Assize, at the time of the Second Coming. The phrase “in that day” or “in the day of judgment” is frequent (Mt. vii, 22; Mk. xiii, 27; Mt. x, 15; Lk. x, 12; Mt. xi, 22; Mt. xii, 36), and equally frequently it is connected with the coming of the Lord or the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom—e.g. the parables of the Vineyard, of the Talents, of the Unwatchful Servants, of the royal Marriage Feast; or the sayings about confessing or denying men when the Son of Man cometh (Mk. viii, 38). In the parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mat-

thew only) is much the clearest suggestion of a Great Assize, for which all nations are to be collected. What the evidence suggests, then, is that Our Lord spoke of a second coming in glory, when divine judgment would be declared on all living, but that those who died before the coming would receive immediate treatment. Luke alone refers to the "resurrection of the just" (xiv, 14) presumably to share in the joys of the Kingdom.

There is a good deal of confusion as to who shall declare sentence. In one saying—apparently Q—the Twelve are to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In the parable of the Tares, it is the Son who is to administer judgment through His angels (Mt. xiii, 41). It is also the Son (or Master who returns) in the parable of the Drunken Steward (Lk. xii, 46), in the parable of the Pounds and in that of the Wicked Husbandmen; it is also, apparently, Christ in the parable of the Ten Virgins; and in the Sheep and Goats it is explicitly stated that it is the Son of Man who shall sit on the throne. On the other hand there are passages in which it seems to be God who is judge: it is before God that Christ will confess or deny men; it is God who has power to cast into Gehenna; and at the end of the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Mt. xviii, 35) "so shall my heavenly Father do unto you if ye forgive not every man his brother."

There seems, therefore, to be some uncertainty as to who is to pass judgment. The obvious inference from that is that, although Our Lord insisted that there would be a judgment, and expected it in connection with his second coming, yet he left the details of it deliberately vague and confused, an example which we shall do well to follow. But we may note that the clearest indications suggest that the judge will be not God, but Christ himself—which is surely a guarantee that the judgment will be merciful. Nor is there any room left there for a view which has been so often held that God is a stern and strict judge before whom Christ pleads His merits in extenuation of our sins.

The following conclusions, then, would seem to emerge. Our Lord appears definitely to have insisted that there would be a judgment, but there is much to indicate that it will be Fatherly, not seeking abstract justice but the reform of men, taking into consideration their inner condition and not merely their past deeds. It is only Matthew who suggests an exact and detailed scrutiny of the past. True repentance will suffice, and in many cases, even where there is not repentance, the only punishment will be the withholding of rewards. In other cases, the definite infliction of pains and penalties is apparently foretold—but it is Matthew who emphasises them most and only Matthew (except for a quotation from the Old Testament in

Mark) who explicitly declares that punishment is to be eternal. But there are many passages which might be taken to suggest annihilation, not as revenge but because the cases are hopeless. In all that there is nothing to uphold the view of God as stern Judge; indeed usually the judge is represented to be Christ himself, and almost everything points to the judgment as being simply the expression of love, of the divine desire for human betterment, not for the vindication of the moral law. Finally, though it is suggested that Christ expected the judgment at the second coming, the details are left vague, and the possibility of immediate judgment at death is indicated more than once.

Thus, on the whole, forgiveness seems to be God's wish and purpose for men: the apparently sole condition for it, over and over again, is simply repentance; and there is little, if anything, to suggest punishment inflicted to uphold the moral law. One point in the Synoptic teaching remains to be considered; to what extent, if at all, is forgiveness represented as being conditional not only on repentance but also on the sacrifice of Christ himself? Is that regarded as an offering to satisfy justice? The view has often been held, with varying degrees of definiteness, that somehow the mercy and love of God were constrained and not free to act until the claims of Justice had been satisfied. Justice demanded that a penalty should be paid for our sins,

nor could (or would) God forgive them till that penalty had been paid. But Christ did pay it on the cross, and so forgiveness is now possible for us if, by repentance, we seek it. There are passages in the New Testament which can be read in that sense, and it is a view which has at times been widely held. A full consideration of it would clearly lead to a discussion of the doctrine of Atonement, which is outside our present scope. But we cannot pass it over without any notice, for, at any rate in its crude form, it does impinge upon our subject. Such a view seems to suggest that the supreme power of the universe is primarily concerned with the maintenance of justice in its most legal sense; that His first concern is to see that so much penalty is paid for so much wrong-doing,—and that only so can His mercy or love come into play. In a word, it represents God, really, as primarily not Father but the administrator of even-handed justice, and that on very human lines. If one may say so without disrespect, the sort of justice it implies seems to be of the most mechanical type, as far as possible removed from the type of treatment which is remedial. Indeed, on this theory, the punishment is not even exemplary: its sole aim seems to be neither the reform of the sinner nor the warning of his fellows, but the mere satisfaction of abstract justice. And that in the veriest tit for tat way. If in our law courts a fine is inflicted on a man, it

may be paid by someone else. Such a process entirely ignores the spiritual condition of him who is fined. All that is aimed at, apparently, is that the law should be upheld by the fining of some one. In the human sphere that may be desirable and even necessary, but it seems horrible to apply such a theory to the Cross. And yet, put very crudely, that is what seems to lie behind the view we are considering. Somehow God has first of all, as Judge, to see that the penalty is paid: on the Cross Christ paid it for us; and so we are free. If that view is accepted, then is God indeed a Judge.

It is of the first importance that we should consider how far the teaching of Jesus himself gives support to this view. Does He, in fact, represent our forgiveness as conditioned by His death on the Cross? Quite clearly, He does not usually do so. Over and over He tells this or that individual that his sins *are* forgiven, not that they will be when he shall have paid the penalty for them. The condition of forgiveness is simply a forgivable frame of mind on the part of the sinners—they are repentant or (another way of putting it) they “love much”. There is not a word or deed in the life of Christ to suggest that the Jewish sacrificial mode of approach to God, with sin-offerings and the like, was to be continued. Of course, a real penitent will do what he can to repair the evil he has wrought. But there is no suggestion that justice has to be appea-

sed by a sacrifice, or that God demands the payment of a penalty in the ordinary way. Above all, if in the mind of Christ the Cross was to be a penalty borne to satisfy justice, and if the possibility of our forgiveness depended on that fulfilment, it is hard to see how Christ could have prayed "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me". Such words are compatible with other views of the meaning and value of the Cross: but I do not see how Christ could have used them if, in his view, God was a judge who demanded that a penalty for sins should be paid.

Of course, no one for a moment denies that the Cross was a piece of *self*-sacrifice: that is quite beside the point. The vital question is, was it the bearing in our stead of penalties which we ought to have borne?

Two passages in the synoptic gospels have been not uncommonly taken to mean that the death of Christ was just that, a penalty paid in our stead.

(A.) There are the words at the Last Supper in connection with the cup: "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for (ὕπέρ, "on behalf of") many"—(Mk. xiv, 24). With this version, Luke roughly agrees—"This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out on behalf of you" (Lk. xxii, 20) and so does the earliest account we have in I Cor. xi, 25—"This cup is the new covenant in my blood", but in the preceding verse it is

said that the body is "on your behalf". There is a convincing agreement, then, that Christ spoke of himself as inaugurating a new covenant relationship, and that he connected it with the shedding of his blood or the giving of his body on behalf of Christians. The most natural interpretation among his hearers would be to go back to the first covenant, and to see in the shedding of blood a sacrifice on the old lines. And that in fact is exactly what Matthew does—"This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. xxvi, 28). But it is only Matthew who does thus explicitly connect the shedding of blood with the remission of sins in this passage. In view of the general outlook of this gospel we are hardly justified in building very greatly on its isolated witness, especially when the words of Christ as reported by the other writers are capable of an interpretation in complete accord with the general tenor of his teaching about God. His death, His self-sacrifice, was indeed the beginning of a new relation between God and man, not because it satisfied the claims of justice, but because it revealed God in the fullest light as Father, ever ready to sacrifice Himself for His sons.

(B.) The other synoptic passage to be considered is Mk. x, 45—"to give his life a ransom for many" (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν), which is verbally identical with Mt. xx, 28. Λύτρον means literally a

“price paid”, ἀντί means literally “instead of”. If Christ spoke the words and they are to be taken literally, then this does seem to be a quite explicit statement that he did bear the penalty which in strict justice should have been ours. But it is deserving of note that the evidence for the words is virtually confined to Mark. Luke has nothing like them; though he has a passage similar to their Marcan context where they might have been included in his Gospel. That Matthew includes them is just what we should have expected and does not very greatly add weight to the testimony of Mark. On these grounds, some critics have maintained that they are probably not genuine words of Christ, but are due to early Christian modes of thought. That is possible; but, after all, Mark is our earliest gospel and is, so far as we know, reliable. Others have held that the words are not to be pressed literally, that they merely mean that Christ carried His service of men even to the extent of a self-sacrificing death so that men might be led to reform their ways. And that seems to be a perfectly fair interpretation. Neither of these suggestions can be proved beyond the possibility of doubt. But I do personally feel driven to suppose that one or other of them (preferably the second) is true. Else we are left with one isolated saying which cuts right across the general teaching of Christ (which only demands repentance) and which can-

not be brought into agreement with the cry in the Garden which seems to suggest that perhaps the Cross might not be necessary.

It seems, then, that really there is not in the synoptics any teaching of Christ that justice had to be satisfied on the Cross before the Fatherly forgiveness of God could function freely.

CHAPTER III

The Acts and St. Paul

(A) *The Acts.*

THE account which Acts gives of the early church is singularly convincing, and to write it Luke must have been either a consummate artist or a most careful historian (for his day) or both. No doubt the speeches are not verbatim reports, but they are at least so simple in theology, so lacking in the thoughts which we regard as characteristically Pauline that the only satisfactory way to account for them is to suppose that Luke had discovered at Jerusalem at least the general character of the earliest teaching. In nothing is this more clear than in the treatment of the Cross. Nowhere is there any suggestion that it was a price paid for our sins or a sin-offering. Such an idea would, one cannot but feel, have been welcomed by the early Christians: it would at least have suggested *some* explanation of the Cross. But the whole evidence in the early parts of Acts is that the Cross was an awkward fact for the Christian preachers for which they had somehow to account. Later on, St. Paul had an explanation to offer, and gloried in the Cross: but the early Christians rather tried to concentrate attention on the

Resurrection. The Cross was treated apologetically. St. Peter is at pains to show that it did not upset the purposes of God— (e.g., ii, 23—He was “delivered up according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”). At the same time His death is regarded as due not so much to God’s will as to the action of wicked men, which, in the event, God over-ruled by the Resurrection; ii, 23, “ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up”; iii, 14, “ye denied the Holy One . . . and killed the Prince of Life whom God raised from the dead”. A few verses later (iii, 18) the Cross is excused as the fulfilment of prophecy—“the things which God foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer he thus fulfilled”. In the speech to Cornelius (x, 39) the Cross is mentioned as a mere fact of history. But nowhere in the early part of Acts is it mentioned as being the condition or price of our forgiveness. That is a very striking fact, in view of St. Paul’s emphasis on the Cross. It entirely accords with what we have already seen as to the synoptic teaching. As we believe the doctrine that abstract justice had a claim which needed to be satisfied is absent from the teaching of Christ, so also it was apparently unknown in the early Church.

Apart from this negative evidence, Acts does not add very materially to our knowledge of the doctrine of the Divine Judgment. One feels, perhaps,

that the thought of the second coming, which plainly carried with it the idea of judgment, occupied a larger place in the minds of the early Christians than it did in that of Christ. It is true that apparently Christ spoke of the second coming constantly, but it did not deprive His teaching of a serene calm which still convinces us. The early Church, on the other hand, seems in a way to have looked at everything in the terms of judgment shortly to come. There is little in the early speeches about that love of God on which Jesus used to dwell; and Luke's summary (xxiv, 25) of St. Paul's preaching to Felix, that he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and the judgment to come" admirably fits also the early speeches of St. Peter. These are calculated to rouse not love of God but fear of Him, and that indeed was their result. St. Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost were obviously cowed and asked "What shall we do?" One feels that the terrors of the judgment to come when, as he says, (iii, 23) "every soul which shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed", are the main appeal. The whole system of voluntary communism, however admirable, presupposed a speedy end of the world: for it was not merely communism, it was apparently living on capital. The gift at Pentecost, by means of a quotation from Joel, is turned into a sign of the end. The judgment is the uppermost thought in men's minds.

On the other hand, so far as one can see, there is no serious attempt to fill in the vague outlines of the parousia and judgment which Christ gave, by drawing on Jewish apocalyptic. Christ is to come and there will be an end of the present order, a judgment and the "restoration of all things" (iii, 21) That is the sum of what Acts tells us. The early church at least avoided the temptation, which later writers did not always escape, to supply details. But even in the Acts we can see how inevitable it was that this amplification should occur in course of time. There were, of course, no New Testament writings, and Christians studied the Old Testament which was "the Scriptures" of their Lord. Inevitably from it the vague outline of Christ's teaching was in time amplified, and, though that does not occur in Acts, it is plain that already the Old Testament was being studied and searched and applied to Christ. St. Peter's application of the prophecy in Joel has already been noticed: he also applies the Psalms to Christ and says that His sufferings were foretold by "all the prophets", a saying to us very mysterious. Most significant of all, Philip when preaching to the eunuch definitely refers Isaiah liii, 7—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter"—to Christ (though there is nothing to suggest that he interpreted the suffering as effecting remission of sins). I do not for one moment wish to criticise such a searching of the scriptures,

but it does seem to have been the cause later on of a modification of Christ's teaching on Old Testament lines by some of the writers, especially in the matter of sacrifice and of the judgeship of God.

That stage, however, is hardly reached in Acts. Still, as in the teaching of Christ, the way to forgiveness is repentance—(Acts iii, 19), "Repent ye and turn again that your sins may be blotted out". That is the fundamental idea repeatedly expressed. The only additions to it are that frequently Baptism is urged (ii, 38) and belief on the name of the Lord (x, 43). Dogmatically, those two additions do not mark any notable advance in the doctrine of judgment. Christ had not in His life practised Baptism, but, according to the concluding verses of Matthew, He ordered it after His resurrection. In any case its symbolism is clear: it is the outward sign of the new life of the penitent. Repentance is the only fitting preparation for it and for the life to which it leads. That belief in Christ should also be demanded is only natural. There is nothing in the early part of Acts to suggest any Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, but merely the insistence that Christ should be recognised as Messiah and trusted—which has little bearing on the doctrine of the judgment.

(B) *St. Paul.*

In Acts, then, we find that the church has not seriously amplified or changed the doctrine of judgment as it was preached by our Lord. True repentance is all that is needed for salvation in the near-approaching judgment, though those who repent are invited to seek through Baptism admission into that society which called upon the Lord and which had found through Him the overwhelming joy of the sense of friendship with God. The teaching of St. Paul invites much fuller discussion. He was not primarily a systematic theologian, but a man who had come to know the peace of God, and who could bring others to know it. That is why he has lived. It is not always possible to work out a consistent system of his views, and it is vital to remember that before he was a Christian he had been a Jew, and that he never entirely shook off his rabbinical training. None the less, few have a better right than he to speak for Christianity, and if he did not grasp its true and fundamental meaning we may well despair of doing so.

Yet, at first, one does seem to get into a different atmosphere when one passes from the synoptic gospels to St. Paul. Almost the very vocabulary seems to change. The usual synoptic word for "forgive" (*ἀφίημι*) is only used once by Paul of divine forgiveness, and even then in a quotation

from a psalm (Ro. iv, 7). The familiar ἄφεσις appears once in Ephesians and once in Colossians, but nowhere else in the Pauline corpus. The noun for repentance—μετάνοια—is used once in Romans, twice in II Corinthians, and not elsewhere; the verb for “repent” is only found once, in II Corinthians, and therein a reference to those who have not repented. The “forgiveness for repentance” of the Gospels seems now to be ousted by “justification by faith”. And few of us will think the change an improvement. To the modern reader, “justified” in St. Paul seems really for all practical purposes to be equivalent to “forgiven”: the Christian being justified, starts on his new life with his past sins blotted out—and what is that but to be forgiven? Why should Paul then as it were go out of his way to take us from the atmosphere of the Gospel to that of the Law Court? For it is practically agreed among critics that “justified”—δικαιωθείς—has a forensic sense: it means “pronounced just”, “acquitted”, and at once raises a mental picture of the heavenly court with God as Judge rather than Father, passing sentence on men.

And not only so. In the Gospels, as we have seen, forgiveness is free, conditional simply on Repentance. But in St. Paul, again and again, the language used most naturally suggests that our “justification” has been purchased by the Cross. In the earliest of the letters (I Thess. v, 10) the

death was "on our behalf"—a vague phrase which can be matched in the Gospels. But later on more definite language is used. We are to regard other men as "brothers for whom Christ died" (I Cor., viii, 11; Rom. xiv, 15). The inspiration of St. Paul's own life is that the Son of God died for him (Gal. ii, 20). More definite still, we have been "bought with a price" (I Cor. vi, 20, and again vii, 23); "Christ was made unto us . . . redemption" (I Cor. i, 30); "redemption" is "in Christ" (Rom. iii, 24; Eph. i, 7; Col. i, 14). Christ was sent in fact to "buy out" those under the law (Gal. iv, 5). In Gal. iii, 13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law; having become a curse for us"—and He did it by hanging on a tree, the Cross. The same thought is present in II Cor. v, 21 "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf"; and in Col. ii, 14 "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us . . . he hath taken it out of the way nailing it to the Cross". Surely in the face of such passages it is impossible not to regard the Cross as being in some sense a price paid by Christ for our forgiveness. Repentance alone is not regarded as sufficient to win it. Somehow we seem to be far outside the synoptic atmosphere—back to the old notion of a God who pronounces sentence on men, who demands punishment equivalent to the wrong done, but who in our case passes sentence of justification not because we *are*

just but because the fine, so to speak, has been paid on the Cross, and the claims of justice thereby satisfied. In such a view God emerges not as Father but as mere judge.

On the other hand, few could speak more convincingly than St. Paul, more persuasively, with a deeper note of overwhelming joy, about the goodness and the love of God. He never—like Christ in this—speaks of Him as Judge; and it would be wearisome to try to count the times when he speaks of Him as Father. God is so named in the salutation of every epistle, and many other times besides. He is “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” (II Cor. i, 3). He is the God of peace (Rom. xv, 33; xvi, 20), and His peace passeth understanding (Philip iv, 7). He is the God of hope who fills believers with all joy and peace (Rom. xv, 13). Peace and grace, in the salutations, are what men are to expect from Him. From the love of God nothing can separate us (Rom. viii, 39). There is an almost crushing sense of this goodness of God in the beginning of Ephesians. Christians have been chosen “to the praise of the glory of his grace” (i, 6); forgiveness is “according to the riches of his grace which he made to abound towards us” (i, 7); “God being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us . . . quickened us” (ii, 4, 5), and so on. Indeed, so great is St. Paul’s sense of the goodness of God that he almost appears to

fear that men may abuse it—"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness . . . not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. ii, 4).

There, surely, is the God of the synoptics—the Father, full of mercy and love for all His sons, not the mere dealer out of justice. St. Paul had indeed grasped the message of Christ of the Fatherhood of God. That is the heart of his message too. The legal language, at any rate by itself, does not for him express the ultimate truth about God; it is rather, it would seem, a legacy from Judaism or at least from a Jewish and legalistic way of looking at God. As a Jew, St. Paul would have had a great reverence for the Law: it was regarded by the devout Jews as a great joy and privilege from God: God had granted to them and not to other nations to know His will and worship Him aright. Nor is there any evidence that St. Paul ever cast aside his reverence for the Law as the great utterance of God. We often carelessly think that he disparages the Law, but it is not so. He regards it as no longer, since Christ, having a claim to our obedience, but of it in itself he has nothing but good to say. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good" (Rom. vii, 12). Among the advantages possessed by the Jews the foremost was their having the "oracles of God" (Rom. iii, 2). His own conscience approves of its behests (Rom. vii,

22), and the fulfilment of them he still regards as profitable (Rom. ii, 25). He is horrified at the idea that the Law should be called sin (Rom. vii, 7), or regarded as opposed to the promises of God (Gal. iii, 21). On the contrary those Gentiles are highly praised who by the light of nature live up to the standard set by the Law (Rom. ii, 14), and he maintains that even Christians, though free from its letter, none the less in spirit still fulfil its ordinances (Rom. viii, 4). He had, in fact, all the average Jew's veneration for the Law. But his own bitter experience had taught him that it did not, in fact, lead man to righteousness. That, however, was not the fault of the law, but of men—"What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," etc. (Rom. viii, 3); "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. vii, 14). And so "the commandment which was unto life, this I found unto death" (Rom. vii, 10). St. Paul believed the Law to have been God's Law, to lead men to life: it was man's fault that it had not done so.

Now, it was customary among Jews of that day, as Mr. St. John Thackeray has shown, to picture God as continually weighing in the balance the deeds of men, the test being their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the Torah ("St. Paul and Contemporary Jewish Thought" p. 81). "Moreover," says Mr. Thackeray (p. 83), "a man's own righteous acts could be supplemented by the merits of the dead

patriarchs". In those two contemporary Jewish ideas lies the genesis, as it seems to me, of a great deal of what St. Paul says. The Law had failed to effect the reformation God desired; but it *was* the utterance of God, good in itself, and could not therefore simply be abrogated: that would have shown inconsistency on the part of God. If He was to be true to His own words, the Law had to be fulfilled, its penalty paid. God Himself, in His great love, provided the price. Christ died on the Cross, and so for ever satisfied the claims of the Law. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea, rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii, 33, 34). (The last clause should not, I think, be taken to suggest an angry Father, but rather the constant presence by the throne of one whose merits outweigh the whole claims of the Law). And so the Law is satisfied, and that for ever: we are no longer under the Law but under grace (Rom. vi, 14). We are justified, acquitted. Therefore the Jew can approach God as freely as the Gentile (Eph. ii, 18).

That this was St. Paul's thought is borne out by the fact that he almost always speaks of justification as a thing already accomplished. It is *not* the same as salvation, which still hangs in the balance. For example, he is not, at times, sure of his

own fate (Philip iii, 11, 12), and Christians are those who are *being* saved (σωζόμενοι) not those who have been saved (σωθέντες) (I. Cor. i, 18). But justification—acquittal under the Law—has been once and for all effected by the Cross. It was the Law which was nailed on the Cross (Col. ii, 14); it was those under the curse of the Law whom Christ bought out (Gal. iv, 5). The price was paid to satisfy the Law, which God having established had in self-consistency to carry out.

In such thoughts the modern reader is scarcely likely to follow St. Paul. Indeed, it is often suggested that when he used Jewish modes of thought or expression, he did not himself really believe them but used them only because he was arguing with Jews. That may be so, although to my mind such ways of thought seem to be too deeply planted in the epistles to be regarded as mere concessions to his opponents. Be that however as it may, the thoughts about the Cross and Redemption outlined above did offer to St. Paul (or to his Jewish-Christian reader) a solution of a twofold difficulty. They provided a rationale of the Cross—"to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks folly"—and they provided an explanation of how it was possible for God to be gracious to men although they had failed to carry out His law, a problem which Christ's teaching of free forgiveness must have presented to every Jewish venerator of the

Law. Those are problems, at least the second of them, which do not press on us as they did on St. Paul. That should be remembered. But there is no need for us, because we may think his theory fanciful, to lessen in any degree the respect we have for his teaching as a whole or to doubt his real hold on Christian truth. Rather his theory proves exactly the reverse; so far would he go in order to cling to the central truth of Christianity that the deepest and truest and most permanent aspect of God is not as administrator of justice but as Father. The Law was a temporary episode, devised by God in love for His people.

St. Paul's doctrine of justification has necessarily been considered at some length. For it is a very real crux in his teaching, and if it is not thoroughly examined we may derive from his legal language about justification a misleading impression of his ultimate teaching about God. St. Paul is as emphatic as is Christ in insisting on the love of God—the Law itself was the expression of it. And when the Law had failed, since it could not be abrogated, God Himself provided the penalty; for, again and again, St. Paul couples God with Christ in the work of Redemption—He was “in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (Rom. viii, 3, 32; II. Cor. v, 19; Eph. iii, 11; and especially Col. i, 19, 22). But *it is not a strict judge who himself provides the penalty; it is a Father.* And outside the cycle of

ideas we have so far been discussing, it is almost always the sheer goodness of God which St. Paul stresses. Much has already been quoted to that effect, but two further points may be noted. Although St. Paul speaks of θυμός and ὀργή in connection with God—words which will be considered shortly—yet quite definitely God is not thought of as inimical. The Cross is not to appease a hostile God: on the contrary (Rom. v, 8) it is the proof of His love “God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And, secondly, there is never any suggestion that God needs to be reconciled to us: it is always we who need to be reconciled to God (Rom. v, i; II. Cor. v, 20; Rom. v, 10; II. Cor. v, 18).

Moreover, although the word “repentance” is seldom used, yet in fact the way to such reconciliation with God is by a total change in us, in our whole attitude to God and life, which is, ultimately, what is really meant by μετάνοια. There are few who show so genuine an abhorrence of their past as St. Paul; his former condition was a “body of death”: he is “not meet to be called an apostle” because of his deeds in that old life. The same feeling of revulsion from the past is expressed all through. The beginning of Christianity for the Thessalonians was their turning over; they turned to God from idols (I Thess. i, 9). And, more gener-

ally, "neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. vi, 15) and "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II. Cor. v, 17). It is true that, as compared with the teaching of Christ, St. Paul's whole scheme is complicated by his doctrine of election: the change can occur in a man only so far as it has been granted to him by God. None the less, the main outline is the same, fundamentally, as in the teaching of Christ. God is a God of Fatherly love: all that we need in order to be in right relation with Him is not the payment of penalties but a real change of heart: in fact true repentance brings forgiveness.

Further, this true Fatherliness is compatible, as in the teaching of Christ, so in St. Paul, with fatherly judgment. Although we are justified, we still have judgment to face. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ" (II. Cor. v, 10); "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom. xiv, 10). Further, again as in the Gospels, the time of this judgment is usually identified with the parousia. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (I. Cor. iv, 5). The Thessalonians are to hope to be "unblameable" at the coming of the Lord (I. Thess. iii, 13; cf. Philip. i, 10). It is on that day that God will "render to every man according to his works"

(Rom. ii. 6). And there is a good deal to suggest (as Christ also suggested) that the punishment may be severe, for there is no attempt on St. Paul's part to minimise the Messianic Woes. There is to be "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil" (Rom. ii, 9). Over and over again, the parousia is simply described as "the day of wrath". But that does not mean that God is to be regarded as passionately hostile. According to Sanday and Headlam (on Rom. i, 18), the use of ὀργή θεοῦ in the New Testament "seems to be mainly if not entirely eschatological". It is the expression of God's permanent opposition to evil which will find expression on the day of wrath—an idea which is further expressed by θυμός in the passage just quoted from Romans ii, 9. For that word, again according to Sanday and Headlam (on Rom. ii, 8), means simply the outward manifestation of the settled feeling of ὀργή. But it is wrong to regard it as having any of the passionate, inimical quality of human anger. It is really the natural expression of God's love opposing itself to that which is evil in men and therefore spoils them. Though such anger may issue in punishments, and those severe, yet we may *a priori* expect them to be remedial not retributive or merely penal. Such we found to be the teaching of Christ (with the possible exception of suggestions of annihilation);

what has St. Paul to say on this point? Is the purpose of the judgment according to him the satisfaction of abstract justice, or is it our amendment?

So long as the judgment is represented as merely taking account of deeds rather than of what men are, punishment must, I think, tend to be regarded as retributive, a squaring of accounts. And there are passages in St. Paul which suggest (like the "every idle word" in Matthew) that it is deeds which are to be regarded. For example, Gal. vi, 7, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap"; and Rom. ii, 2, "the judgment of God is against them that practise such things". But it is difficult to discover many examples of this in St. Paul. In the vast majority of cases it is not deeds but men who are to be judged, and we are away from law-court justice, in the presence of one who looks at men as they are. It is against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness" (the qualities) that the wrath of God is revealed (Rom. i, 18). It is a hard and impenitent heart that treasures up wrath for itself (Rom. ii, 5). Still more explicitly, it is the "secrets of men" that are to be judged in that day (Rom. ii, 16). The Lord is to "bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I. Cor. iv, 5). Moreover, though a man's work may have been worthless, yet he himself may be saved. "Each man's work

shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire. . . . If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (I. Cor. iii, 13-15).

The last quotation is interesting for our inquiry. Not only is it men who are to be examined rather than mere deeds, but quite definitely punishment or penalty is inflicted by God not as a mere due but with a view, obviously, to ultimate salvation. The man is to be saved "as through fire"—and surely the thought of the refiner's fire, burning away impurities, was in St. Paul's mind. Such a view of divine punishment working in this life was of course a commonplace among the Jews; and such punishment is, of course, fatherly. More than once St. Paul shows his belief in it. In II. Thess. i, 5, persecution is "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of God". That passage, it is true, might be interpreted otherwise, but I. Cor. xi, 32, is quite clear: "when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world". Remedial punishment, in this life, then, was an idea familiar to St. Paul; and in Corinthians he seems to regard it as being applied, at least to some, on the day of judgment.

It is, however, only fair to add that this is the

only statement in St. Paul to that effect. Apart from it we have simply to rely on his general statements and from them try to deduce his belief. In the main he is content merely to state that there will be punishment, and it is implied severe punishment, on the wicked, without saying anything as to its motive or purpose. It is perhaps worth noticing that the greatest stress on it is to be found in Thessalonians—the most nearly Jewish of all his letters—but it is also to be found elsewhere. “If any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (I. Cor. iii, 17). The end of the enemies of the Cross of Christ is destruction (Philip. iii, 19; and cf. i, 28). The vessels of wrath, in Romans, are, it is clearly implied, to be broken. Those who are not Christians are, apparently, “by nature children of wrath” (Eph. ii, 3), and “the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience” (Col. iii, 6). That all looks like mere retribution; but if destruction is taken to mean actual annihilation, it may mean—as similar sayings in the Gospels may mean—simply God’s destruction of that which is hopeless; certainly the destruction of the vessels of wrath looks like that. Such action on the part of God is certainly compatible with true Fatherhood in a way in which eternal punishment is not. But in the teaching of St. Paul there is another complication, again due to his doctrine of election, which is not to be found in the Gospels.

If there are vessels of wrath then, on St. Paul's theory, it must be because God has made them so, or allowed them to be so. And that does indeed suggest an unfatherly attitude on His part.

It is impossible here to diverge into a long discussion of St. Paul's doctrine of election. But a word must be said about it. It arose, almost certainly, from his own experience. He felt that his salvation was due simply and solely to God having taken control: that feeling he generalised into the belief that all salvation is due not at all to man but only to the working of God. Logically that implies that those who are not saved owe their fate to God's failure to work in them; that is, the fault is God's not theirs. But St. Paul was not a logician and there is nothing to suggest that he ever consciously drew that conclusion, which is indeed quite the reverse of his general teaching of the goodness of God. Had he been logical, there could have been no place for his frequent exhortations to his readers to live a Christian life. Had he been logical, he could not have said that "God willeth all men to be saved" and yet contemplate the possibility of vessels of wrath to be destroyed. What really happened, probably, was that he was content to glory in what God had done for him in spite of himself, without ever consciously holding God responsible for the failures among men. The logical implications of his doctrine of election did not really affect his whole-hearted

belief in the goodness of God; if there were men only fit for destruction, that, somehow, was not God's fault. We may not agree with St. Paul here, but it is his view we are trying to elucidate not our own, at the moment: and to him election was a proof of the goodness of God, while the logical implications of non-election were passed over.

From the mere fact, then, that St. Paul contemplates that some may have to be destroyed, or at least heavily punished, it is not possible to argue that he thought of God as harsh, or of the judgment as other than fatherly, though of a Father who seeks to make the best of his sons. But there are one or two places where he seems to speak of God as an avenger. In I Thess. iv, 6 he says "The Lord is an avenger in all these things." In II Thess. i, 8 Christ is represented as "rendering vengeance to those that know not God". But both these passages are in Thessalonians, where Paul was in his most Jewish mood, and they cannot be taken as evidence of his mature point of view. For, to the Jews, the vengeance of God on His enemies was a striking feature of apocalyptic prophecy. It was regarded as part of God's vindication of His own, a thought which again comes out in Thessalonians (II Thess. i, 6) "if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you". Outside Thessalonians, we read in Romans (xii, 19) "Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recom-

pense, saith the Lord"—but it is a quotation from Deuteronomy, merely to remind Christians not to avenge themselves. In Colossians (iii, 25) it is said that "he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done." But in their context the words are an encouragement to holiness; they are a mere statement of the fact of punishment and do not imply vengeance. Seldom elsewhere does Paul speak of God as recompensing, except in the way of reward (Eph, vi, 8; Col. iii, 24). In one passage the heathen are spoken of as "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due" (Rom. i, 27). But it is not inflicted by God; it is the direct outcome of their own lusts, due simply to the fact that God did not interfere but "gave them up unto vile passions" (Rom. i, 26).

I think that those are the only passages which suggest simply vengeance or retribution on the part of God; and they appear to be due to Jewish modes of thought. Later on, they do not appear in St. Paul, explicitly. It is, of course, open to anyone to suppose that he continued to hold the Jewish view of the judgment at the parousia as being retributive rather than reformatory. I do not think we can prove the matter either way, because we do not know what was St. Paul's view of "destruction". But what indications there are seem rather to suggest that, at times at any rate, even in regard to the

judgment, the notion of Fatherliness predominated in his mind over that of mere administrator of justice. There are, for example, those, in Corinthians, who are to be saved "so as through fire". There is the suggestion, in Romans, that the fulness of the Gentiles is to be gathered in and all Israel saved. And there is the fact, perhaps significant, that though St. Paul frequently speaks of "eternal life", he never mentions "eternal punishment". The nearest he comes to it—again in Thessalonians—is when he says (II Thess. i, 9) that some shall "suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord"; and even there the essence of their punishment is banishment. On the other hand it is noticeable that in Rom. ii, 7-9, where the reward of the good is eternal life, it is merely said that the evil will be punished, without any suggestion that it is to be eternally so.

And there the question must be left. The fact is that, except where Jewish influence is strong, St. Paul does not say anything (so far as I have noticed) which suggests retributive punishment; but there is certainly not much which can be taken to prove that he did not retain the idea. As he grew older, the judgment seems to have held a diminishing place in his thoughts. It is prominent in Thessalonians, and in I Corinthians xv, and in Romans. But there is hardly a reference to it at all in II Corinthians. In the captivity period, he had ceased

to expect the parousia in his own life-time, and it is only referred to, not at all fully described. He still believed that there was to be a parousia—and no doubt the wicked would be punished. But his main thought of it is one not of fear but of joy. All through his writings it is true to say that St. Paul (unlike Matthew) dwells very little on the judgment with a view to play upon his readers' feelings and frighten them into reform. In the last of his letters this is pre-eminently so: the parousia is not to be anticipated by Christians with fear but with joy. "The Lord is at hand", in Philip. iv, 5, is a source of comfort and strength: already his readers' names "*are* in the book of life" (Philip. iv, 3) they are simply awaiting a "saviour from heaven" (Philip. iii, 20, 21). The Ephesians—or at least the recipients of the Ephesian letter—have *been* saved by grace (ii, 8), they are "sealed unto the day of redemption" (iv, 30), and were "chosen before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i, 4); the Christians have already with Christ entered into the heavenly places (Eph. ii, 5, 6). There is the same idea in Colossians (i, 12, 13), and, in that letter, the manifestation of Christ is to be also the manifestation in glory of his followers (iii, 3, 4).

That is the aspect of judgment on which, at the end of his life, Paul dwells: it is to be the vindication of Christians. Corresponding to that confidence is the firm conviction that, for Christians who die

before the day, there is no need to wait for the parousia: they will at once be with Christ. Even in II Corinthians (v, 8) he declares that he would prefer to be absent from the body that he may be present with the Lord. So also in Philippians (i, 23) he has the "desire to depart and be with Christ: for it is very far better". At the end he seems to have been sure that God's calling was certain and irrevocable (Philip. i, 6, "he that began a good work in you will perfect it"). Those who died at once would be with Christ, perhaps after individual judgment: those who remained on earth could regard the parousia and its accompanying judgment merely as a time of entering upon certain joy. Surely such a judgment can only be regarded as that of a merciful Father: for Paul was the last to maintain that he or any man had merited eternal joy.

Such is St. Paul's doctrine of the judgment, in essentials the doctrine of Christ himself, and even in the detail that sometimes God and sometimes Christ seems to be in control. The misleading legal language is due to Jewish ideas and indeed concerns a past justification rather than the final judgment. For that, what a man needs is a fundamental change of heart and life: that God will accept, for He is a God of love. Judgment there will be, but the Christian need not fear it, for God's working in him to make of him a new creature assures him of reform; and it is what men are, rather than

what they have done, which will be considered. Remedial punishment—"so as through fire"—will be meted out to those who have tried, but whose achievements do not pass the test. But for others who have not tried, who have rejected Christ, there is to be punishment. Only in one place is it affirmed to be eternal, and there it is eternal banishment from the presence of Christ. The context is Jewish, as is also the context of all the sayings which suggest vengeance on the part of God. Whether St. Paul did to the end retain those Jewish views it is not possible to say. There is no evidence that he did, for at the end he dwells on the joyous aspect of the parousia almost exclusively. And practically throughout, except in the legal sections, God appears, as in the teaching of Christ, as a God of love, not as a Judge.

CHAPTER IV

The Epistle to the Hebrews

IN spite of complications introduced by the doctrine of election and an outlook at least in part Jewish, the teaching of St. Paul appears to be fundamentally the same as that of Christ himself. In the main, what he stresses is the love of God (which appears to be no whit less abundant than that of Christ) and the need in men of a wholly changed mode of life and outlook. Those are the essential points in his doctrine of salvation. It is possible to find such sentences as "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philip. ii 12); but he does not give as the reason for this the coming judgment (though no doubt it is implied), but at once goes on to paint the beauty of a Christian life "that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish". His real appeal rests rather on the present fulness of joy in the knowledge of God and on present confidence of safety in His love and that of Christ.

The outlook of the writer "To the Hebrews" is very different from that of St. Paul. It is possible that much of what he says is to be regarded as not his own thought but an *argumentum ad hominem*, an attempt to raise Jewish Christian readers to a

higher plane, while making allowances for their preconceived ideas. But certainly, whatever the cause, there is in the epistle, in spite of the prominence of ideas essentially Greek, a great deal which seems to be Jewish. In the main, God is conceived on Old Testament lines, as a righteous God who justly punisheth sin, rather than as a loving Father. Nor is there any suggestion that the punishment He will mete out is to be remedial or reformatory. The nearest the writer ever approaches to such a thought is in the passage where his readers are encouraged to face persecution boldly (xii, 9). "We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" And, it is added, God chastens us "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness". Such a view of the disciplinary suffering of the righteous in this world, however, as has already been pointed out, was not uncommon among Jewish writers, and is not exclusively Christian. That the *final* judgment will result in remedial punishment "for our profit" is nowhere suggested in Hebrews. Rather it is conceived as a distribution of rewards and penalties, the setting right of the apparent maladjustment of the scales of justice in this life. God is not unjust: He will reward the good (vi, 10); and, on the other hand, "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (xiii, 4). Again, for the believer who has lapsed (x, 26)

"there remaineth a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without compassion . . . of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" And there is, too, the figure of the field which beareth thorns and thistles "whose end is to be burned" (vi, 8). In one place it is suggested that Christians may fail to gain admittance into the heavenly rest, which looks like mere exclusion. But, in this book, exclusion must be taken to connote inflicted suffering, for all who are excluded will inevitably be involved in the general cataclysm wherewith heaven and earth are soon to be shaken and destroyed. Throughout, the lot of those who are not saved is represented as terrible, and there is no suggestion that the purpose of their suffering is remedial.

Of the actual process and exact time of the judgment no details are given, and the parousia is seldom mentioned. There is a not very joyous reference to it in ix, 28; "Christ shall appear a second time apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation"; and x, 37—"He that cometh shall come and not tarry"—appears simply as an encouragement to good works. Presumably the time of the coming will also be the judgment time, but the writer is sufficiently hellenized not to reproduce

Jewish apocalyptic details. There is no mention of a coming in splendour or of the setting of the judgment, no picture of the joys of heaven. The place of Jewish details is taken by the Greek philosophic idea of the unreality and instability of the present visible world. Salvation is the transference to the sphere of reality and rest from the vain and weary life on earth. The judgment will be the process of deciding who shall and who shall not make the change. But for those who do not there is no suggestion of mercy or of hope, only of woes and destruction. Unless destruction is to be taken literally, it is difficult to see how the fate of the wicked, as suggested in Hebrews, is to be regarded as other than mere retributive punishment.

But, although Jewish details are not prominent, there is in the book very little to suggest Fatherliness on God's part. He is never called our Father, the nearest approach being the phrase "the father of spirits" in xii, 9. Just previously it has been argued (xii, 6) that if the readers of the epistle are being "chastened" then God is dealing with them as with sons. That is no doubt true: but a writer whose only mention and proof of God's fatherhood is connected with the sufferings of his readers surely fails to hand on fully our Lord's teaching of the Fatherhood of God. And, except here and in the phrase "the God of peace" (xiii, 20), almost through-

out God appears pre-eminently as Judge. A careful reading of the epistle shows that the term "judge" does not alone express the writer's full belief about God. There are hints all through that he thinks of God as wishing for man's salvation and working for it. It was He who appointed Christ (iii, 2) and made Him a priest after the order of Melchizedek (v, 6). He spoke through Christ (i, 1) and it is by His grace that Christ tasted death for every man (ii, 9). God is not merely administrator of justice: He has acted to save us. But to the casual reader, at least, such hints about God are far over-shadowed by the language which stresses His judgeship. "The word of God is . . . sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit . . . quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (iv, 12, 13). Again, "we know him that saith, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense". And again, "The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (x, 30, 31). "God the judge of all" (xii, 23), and "our God is a consuming fire" (xii, 29) are other striking sayings of the same sort.

Moreover, though the parousia with its suggestion of rest and relief is only once or twice explicitly mentioned, the nearness of the end of the world, with its terrible conditions, is several times insisted on. The death of Christ marks "the end of the ages" (ix, 26); Christians are to meet together and

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exhort each other "so much the more as ye see the day drawing nigh" (x, 25). "He that cometh shall not tarry" (x, 37). "Exhort one another so long as it is called to-day" (iii, 13). Plainly, to the writer's mind, the end is near; still he hardly at all speaks of the joy Christians may expect, but concentrates on the need for care. We must give heed to the things we have heard, for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (ii, 3). "To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest but to them that were disobedient?" (iii, 18). "Let us fear lest haply... any of you should seem to come short of it" (iv, 1). "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven" (xii, 25).

In all that, it is the fear of God and His judgment rather than the love of God which is put forward as the inducement to a Christian life. It is very different in emphasis and in theological conception from the teaching either of Christ or of St. Paul, and is really a return to the spirit (though not to the details) of the Jewish teaching. The same appears to be true, at first sight at least, of the writer's theory as to how acquittal or salvation is to be attained. The predominant impression is of a process almost legal or sacrificial. Christ did not apparently enjoy ritual sacrifice in His teaching, but

simply repentance as a means to free pardon: in Hebrews there is nowhere any suggestion of free pardon while a great deal is said of the sacrifice of Christ. Here again it may be that the writer is only accepting the pre-supposition of his readers as to the fundamental necessity of sacrifice and is really trying to raise them to a more spiritual conception of sacrifice. Undoubtedly, he did not regard the mere sacrifice of Christ as effecting salvation apart from a spiritual change in believers. For believers, in fact, must somehow come into real touch with Christ if they are to be safe: "he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one" (ii, 11). It is through Christ that the Christian is to reach the highest to which he is called, the approach "in boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (iv, 16). The significance again of the death of Christ does not lie merely in the fact of the Cross, but rather in His entire obedience to the will of God, the offering of Himself "through eternal Spirit" (ix, 14). The whole idea of sacrifice there is spiritualised; and it seems as though the sacrifice of Christ only avails for the believer in so far as he identifies himself with it in newness of life. For the offering of Christ is to "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (ix, 14). In x, 2-10 again, the difference between the old sacrifices and that of Christ is indicated as lying in the

fact that Christ's sacrifice was simply the doing of the will of God, "in which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus". The implication is that we too are to carry out the will of God as a complement to the sacrifice of Christ. Again, in x, 20, Christ is said to have "dedicated for us a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say his flesh". But the mere opening of a way is not enough: obviously we must follow or use it. In such passages the idea of salvation *ex opere operato*, by the mere external fact of the Cross, is clearly excluded. It is the spiritual value of the Cross, its essential character as self-offering, which is emphasised; and its value for a man comes when, in his life, he identifies himself with it. There is nothing Jewish or legal in such ideas, but the expression, in terms of sacrifice, of the teaching of Christ himself—of the need for newness of life and the complete and willing service to God which He expressed in the word *μετάνοια*.

But side by side with such teaching and, again, over-shadowing it for the casual reader there is other language which does suggest a much more Jewish point of view, and a much more Jewish idea of God as Judge demanding ritual satisfaction. Like St. Paul, the writer to the Hebrews believes that the Old Covenant has been annulled. But St. Paul seems to have regarded the Law as an episode in history, an attempt to lead men to righteousness which had

failed and been supplanted by a better way, "Christ is you, the hope of glory". In Hebrews, on the other hand, there is language which suggests that the Old Covenant with its sacrifices, though inadequate, did truly express the ultimate character and will of God. The old sacrifices, truly, were insufficient; they had to be repeated and the victims were not valuable enough. But still it is suggested that the sacrificial approach to God is the only approach proper for man: God does need to be propitiated. St. Paul certainly did not teach that, though it is true that he also uses sacrificial language concerning the death of Christ. What he says may suitably be considered here. The passages are:—

- (a) I Cor. v, 7—"Our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ".
- (b) Rom. iii, 25—"Whom God set forth *ἱλαστήριον* ("a propitiation" or "propitiatory") through faith by his blood to show his righteousness because of the passing over of sins done aforetime."
- (c) Rom. viii, 3—"God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh": though *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* may not mean "sin-offering" but merely, as it were, to deal with sin.
- (d) Eph. v, 2—"Christ . . . gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an offering of a sweet smell."

Of these passages, the first does not necessarily suggest propitiatory sacrifice: it is surely a reference to the Christian Communion. Among the Jews, the Passover lamb was slain for the common meal; so had Christ been. The last passage is scarcely more than a strong metaphor; the life and *self*-sacrifice of Christ were indeed well-pleasing to God, His way of serving God. Almost exactly the same words are used in Philip. iv, 18—"an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God"—to describe the assistance the Philippians had sent to Paul. But the other two passages, if *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* really does mean "sin-offering", are more difficult. For our purpose, however, it is sufficient to point out that in neither is there any suggestion that God is primarily a judge who needs to be satisfied or placated. In both cases it is expressly said that God was the prime mover, and in both that His object was not to provide propitiation but to show His abhorrence of sin. Whatever difficulties, therefore, St. Paul's sacrificial language may present, it quite definitely does not contradict his general teaching of the love of God.

In Hebrews, on the other hand, the sacrificial language does at times seem to imply that God needs to be propitiated, that He is judge rather than Father. Otherwise, a good deal of the argument falls to the ground. For example, (ix, 22, 23), "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was

necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these"; which appears to carry the system of purificatory sacrifice into the realm of the eternal. Again, we have been "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (x, 10)—a passage which suggests that our salvation, though to be completed in us, has yet been made possible by a sacrifice completely external to us. "Jesus that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate" (xiii, 12). There are many other passages to the same effect, suggesting that it is only through sacrifice (not repentance) that God may be approached by sinners. The death of Christ was "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (ix, 26; cf. ix, 12). In one place it appears to be suggested that the death was in order to overcome death and to "bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (ii, 14). But the more usual point of view is that it was a sacrifice rendered, as were the Old Testament sacrifices, to God. Christ "made purification of sins" (i, 3); He made "propitiation for the sins of the people" (ii, 17). It is difficult there to shake off the impression that the death was a sacrifice or penalty paid for us by Christ—a penalty which otherwise we should have had to pay. But now our penalty has been paid for us by Christ, and

so through Him we may approach God without fear, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near in fulness of faith" (x, 19, 22).

In passages such as these we seem to be much nearer to Jewish conceptions than in the teaching of Paul or Jesus. It has therefore been supposed by some, in view of the deeper teaching of the writer about the sacrifice of Christ and the need for our self-identification with it, that this Jewish tone is a concession to his readers and does not express his own mind. If that is so, the fact should be more widely known than it is. For it is precisely such language in Hebrews, taken as the literal expression of Christian truth, and not as a mere *argumentum ad hominem*, which has probably done more than anything else to bolster up the conception of God as needing to be propitiated and as really demanding some sacrifice for sin other than repentance, reform and self-offering. But for my own part I cannot help feeling that the writer is not merely considering his readers' feelings but that he too agrees that somehow sacrifice for sin is demanded by the very nature of things and of God. Although he spiritualizes the meaning of sacrifice and although he does not believe that an act completely external to us by itself can save us, yet there is no hint, I believe, that *apart* from the sacrifice of Christ mere repentance would be enough to secure forgiveness

from a loving Father. All really is made to rest on the sacrifice of Christ, and repentance is hardly mentioned at all. In vi, 1, "repentance from dead works" is just mentioned as among the "first principles of Christ". Elsewhere in this epistle the word is only used twice (vi, 6; xii, 17), and in each case to show how ineffective repentance is if a man once falls away from grace. The scheme in the writer's mind seems to be that the death of Christ (if we identify ourselves with it) is available as a sacrifice for past sins (compare ix, 15, "a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant"). That is the basis of the Christian's hope: that he must accept at baptism with a "change of mind from dead works". And it seems that God is regarded as demanding that sacrifice before the new life with a clean record can be open to us. But for sin subsequent to baptism there seems to be no remedy at all, either in the Cross or in repentance. "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment" (x, 26). "As touching those who were once enlightened . . . and then fell away . . . it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" (vi, 4-6). Esau, we are reminded, having once lost his blessing could not recover it for all his repentance and tears (xii, 17). The inference is clear; the God

with whom the Christian has to deal is Judge rather than Father, despite the fact that we have, as it were, a second chance through the death of Christ (x, 18).

Thus Christianity is presented as being now the carrying out of the new law. It is true that God will help men to achieve this (xiii, 20, 21): to that extent He is helper and not mere judge. But there is much greater stress than in St. Paul, for example, on the urgent need of exactly fulfilling the Christian law. "Ye have need of patience that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise" (x, 36). It is the disobedient who are to be excluded (iii, 18). We are to fear lest we fall short; and so on. One gets the impression that in St. Paul's thought right works naturally and easily follow from right relationship with God, and it is that relationship therefore and its joys which are chiefly emphasised in the later epistles; but in Hebrews the thought is rather that the Christian code is clear-cut and that Christians must observe it scrupulously. Any falling away will lead to terrible punishment, without hope of remission, at the hands of a God of justice. It is the terrors of that justice which the writer puts forward as an inducement to the Christian life rather than the intrinsic beauty or joy of goodness.

Such a conception of God and the judgment seems far removed from the teaching of Christ; it

is a sort of reversion to Judaism. In Hebrews the justice of God appears to demand the sacrifice of Christ as the price of our second chance. Only in return for that sacrifice could past sin be forgiven, and now, for the future, only by meticulous obedience to the Christian law can a man be saved from destruction. That is very like the old view (familiar to us in much Jewish thought) of God and the law and the judgment.

It is held by many critics that one purpose of the epistle to the Hebrews was to prevent apostasy in a time of persecution; for the sin for which no repentance will avail does appear pre-eminently to be that of denying Christ. Such circumstances would most easily account for the harsh view of God and the judgment; but they would also justify us in wondering whether the natural human desire to see one's persecutors punished has not affected the writer's presentation of Christian truth.

CHAPTER V

The Revelation

ANOTHER book almost certainly written when Christians were being oppressed, if not actually persecuted, is the Revelation. Its motive seems to have been the same as that of many Jewish Apocalypses (e.g. Daniel), the wish to give encouragement in time of stress. And the method of encouragement is, as in Daniel and Hebrews, the promoting of the impression that the end is almost immediately at hand. Hebrews dresses this thought in Hellenistic garb: Revelation without any such disguise reintroduces both the method and the details of the older Jewish writers. Human history is treated under the symbols of men and animals (as in Daniel), and the details are so arranged as to suggest that the end must be near. In Daniel vii, the "little horn" which is to be overthrown almost certainly represents the ruling Antiochus; in the Revelation, the beast whose death stroke was healed is almost certainly Nero who, it was not uncommonly expected in the East, would return again to bring further disasters. The "time and times and half a time" of tribulation of Daniel vii, 25, is reinterpreted in Revelation (xii, 14) as the

time of the church's banishment in the wilderness, —and so on. Moreover, Jewish details are lavishly introduced. Angels, as in the Jewish writings, play a great part; and the battle against evil is carried on in heaven as well as on earth. The Anti-Christ, or man of sin, once more becomes prominent; there is great stress on the Messianic Woes, there appears to be a clearly marked millennium, presumably upon earth, and there is a "second death" which is not real obliteration, but the enduring of endless punishment. In fact, the writer is steeped in Jewish apocalyptic. He does not even claim to be reproducing the acknowledged teaching of Christ: the book is a prophesy or revelation, no doubt deliberately intended exactly and precisely to fill up the outlines which Christ had left so vague. But the inspiration of the details is Jewish through and through.

What is the teaching the book contains as to the Judgment? It is almost impossible to work out an exact scheme, especially as the writer appears to cover the same ground (the preparations for the end) twice over, and the details do not always agree. But the woes and evils which are to precede the end are prominent throughout. In the first part of the book (that dealing with the Seven Seals), the first woes seem to be not so much a punishment or judgment as a test of faithfulness, and no doubt his readers would readily identify them with their

own sufferings. The church in Philadelphia is warned (iii, 10) of "the hour of trial (πειρασμός) the hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try (πειράσαι) them that dwell upon the earth"; and, in vii, 14, those in white robes are described as having come "out of the great tribulation". There are, therefore, to be trials for all; but these are a mere test, not part of the final judgment. After that test, there are to be woes which, apparently, are simply directed against the evil, for in vii, 3, the four angels to whom it is given "to hurt the earth and the sea" are restrained from beginning their work until the servants of God have been sealed in their forehead. Then are there terrible plagues (to which death is preferable, ix, 6); and then the judgment of the dead (xi, 18). What is the purpose of these final evils which belong to the last judgment and not to the preliminary period of waiting? Are they remedial, to bring the wicked to a right frame of mind? Or are they simply vengeance? To the writer's mind, at least, there can be little doubt that they are the latter; for he represents those who have been slain for the Word as crying out (vi, 10) "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It is perhaps needless to remark that, to the Jews, the coming of the Messiah was to bring vengeance on their enemies.

Here, then, in the first half of the book, woes are clearly foretold, partly as a test and partly, apparently, as vengeance; then the time of the judgment and the Kingdom. The second part of the book contains a series of less connected visions, but certain of the details of the "last days" become clearer. The writer already seems to see at any rate some sort of presence of the Anti-Christ in the Roman Empire, the imperial worship and its persecution of Christianity. In Chapter xix there is a vivid picture of the coming of the Messiah, conceived here, beyond question, as the conquering Messiah. He rides from heaven on a white horse "and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." He is followed by the armies of heaven and (15) "out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of almighty God." The inspiration of that picture is purely Jewish. (Compare the Psalms of Solomon, xvii, 24, 27, "with a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance, He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth"; also the picture in Isaiah of the one coming from Bozrah with his garments dyed in blood.) After this conquest there is to be a thousand years of the Messiah's rule during which the dragon is rendered powerless, sealed up in the abyss (xx, 2). There is a first

resurrection of martyrs and confessors (xx, 4) to share in the power and happiness of this millennium, just as the author of Daniel (xii) thought of the specially good as rising to share the Kingdom. Then, at the end of the thousand years, Satan is released for a last conflict in which he is finally overthrown (xx, 10) and thrown "into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever". Then comes the final judgment, for which all the dead are summoned, Hades and the sea giving up the souls they hold. And now, significantly, "death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire" (xx, 14). Henceforward there is to be no Hades, no place of moderate (and possibly reformatory) punishment. All those whose names are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire (xx, 15) which is the second death (xx, 14). But in Revelation no doubt is left as to the nature of the second death: the lake of fire is *not* to destroy the worthless: it is to inflict endless torment which can hardly be regarded as remedial since it is to be for ever. It is, at best, retributive, and it may be simply vengeful. That it is everlasting comes out in the passage just quoted about Satan being cast there to be in torment for ever. Again, when Rome is destroyed, the shout of joy in heaven is "he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" (xix, 2) and it is said that

“her smoke goeth up for ever and ever” (xix, 3). Clearly the writer has no pity for the sufferers: one of the joys in heaven is apparently the pleasing prospect of the damned in torture; (xiv, 10) “he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image.”

A detailed consideration of the Revelation is of great value to our inquiry. There can be little doubt that many Christians have in the past drawn their ideas of the final judgment from this book. It is therefore of vital importance to notice and remember how many of its ideas are admittedly not derived from Christ and are demonstrably drawn from Jewish works. The method is Jewish, many of the details—even verbal—are Jewish; and, in places, the frame of mind of the writer is, at bottom, Jewish. He almost seems to gloat over “the Kings of the earth and the chief captains and the rich and the strong” saying “to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb” (vi, 15, 16); or over men drinking “of the wine of the wrath of God which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger” (xiv, 10); or over the “vintage of the earth” being cast into “the great

winepress of the wrath of God" (xiv, 19). It is easy to draw from Revelation proofs that the divine judgment will be retributive and not merely reformatory. But they are of a spirit different from the teaching of Christ: a foreign element dragged in from the past. They have done very great harm, for they tend to obscure Christ's own central doctrine of the Fatherly love of God and the truth which we must infer from it of the Fatherly nature of the judgment.

At least they have done so in the mind of the writer of the Revelation. The Fatherhood of God is nowhere prominent in the book: there is no suggestion of love on His part for the human race. Even the picture of Christ has been considerably modified. He is now drawn primarily as the conqueror who will vanquish his foes. To his friends and faithful followers He is still gracious, but there is little trace of love for those outside the fold or desire to save them. He is to rule the nations with a rod of iron: He is to tread out the winepress of God's wrath: He has the sharp two-edged sword. Even the gracious friend of publicans and sinners has been disguised in garb drawn from Jewish apocalypses. Nor is there any suggestion that repentance is enough to ward off His wrath. Often enough in the letters to the Seven Churches the readers are told to repent. But, though that is necessary, it is not the vital thing; those who are to be saved

will owe it entirely to the blood of the Lamb; in that they must wash their robes and make them white (vii, 14). The whole hope of salvation rests on the death of the Lamb who "hath been slain from the foundation of the world" (xiii, 8)—which presumably means that His death was purposed from eternity. Thus the death of Christ is central. But it is not easy to find any indication of a consistent theory as to how it was efficacious. It is not anywhere said, I think, that it was a sacrifice offered to God. On the contrary, the new song of the saints declares (v, 9) "Thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God (not from God) with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue." And, in xii, 11, the victory of the saints over the devil is "because of the blood of the Lamb." Together, those two suggest some such theory as was widely accepted later on of a ransom paid to the devil, but it is certainly not explicit or definite. Rather the writer is one to whom the Cross of Christ has become central, but who has, so to say, no theology of the Cross. But in this book it is clearly the Cross on which depends salvation, and there is no such evident stress on a change of heart as we get in the teaching of Christ or of St. Paul.

We need not wish to quarrel with the emphasis laid on the death of Christ. That, one supposes, must be central for all Christians. But, apart from that, the picture of the judgment, and the idea of

its motive, method and results is practically irreconcilable with what we know of the teaching of Christ; and where the two clash, the teaching of Christ is to be preferred. It has not always been preferred: the graphic, clear-cut, terrible pictures of Revelation have too often driven out the memory of the heavenly Father. None the less, with the greatest writers of the New Testament it has not been so. Revelation is the extreme case of Jewish colouring; in other writers the tendency has been to throw aside even such Jewish ideas as Christ used, in order to emphasise the true spirit of His teaching. That process can be observed actually taking place in St. Paul's letters as we pass from Thessalonians, with its crude imagery, through the deeper thought of I Corinthians to Ephesians with its overmastering sense of the divine love.

CHAPTER VI

St. John and Other New Testament Books

(A) *St. John.*

IN the Fourth Gospel we have the opposite pole to Revelation, the furthest development away from Jewish thought in the New Testament. Whatever view one may take of the authorship and date of this Gospel, it is clear that the writer has selected and edited the teaching which our Lord is represented as giving. Without denying that many genuine sayings of Jesus may be here preserved yet we must admit that much has also been left out, and that what we are given is so given as to represent the author's interpretation of Christ. And the most striking thing about that interpretation is the way in which it seems to have passed almost entirely beyond Jewish ideas. Thus, the notion of the parousia, as we have had it hitherto, has practically disappeared. There is no suggestion of a second coming the purpose of which is world-conquest. On the contrary, the victory is already won—"I have overcome the world" (xvi, 33); "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (xii, 31); "The prince of this world hath been judged" (xvi, 11). There is, practically, no mention even of a second

coming in glory; it is perhaps hinted at in Chapter xxi, 22 (an appendix)—“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” But even that saying is consistent with a private second coming, and as such the second coming is usually conceived when it is mentioned at all. “I will come again and receive you unto myself” (xiv, 3); “I will not leave you desolate, I will come to you” (xiv, 18). Judas (not Iscariot) asks how He will be able to manifest Himself to the disciples and not to the world, clearly implying that Jesus had spoken of a private second coming. And in xiv, 25-28, this coming of Christ seems to be identified with the sending of the Comforter.

Virtually, then, the second coming in glory as the Messiah for all to see has disappeared, and its place is taken by the conception that the actual presence of Jesus in the flesh was the glorious coming, the presence as Messiah. It is of the days of the flesh that the writer says (i, 14) “We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” To the woman of Samaria, who expects the Messiah to come and settle the disputed points between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus simply says “I that speak unto thee am he” (iv, 26). In dispute with the Jews (viii, 28) Jesus claims “When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he.” Even here, there is no reference, such as we might have expected, to the second coming.

Similarly, again in dispute with the Jews who ask Him directly whether He is the Christ, He replies (x, 25) "I told you and ye believe not; the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me." Even at the Trial, there is no prophecy of a return in glory, but merely a disclaimer that His Kingdom is of this world. It is, I think, beyond doubt that, to the writer, the first coming of Christ *was* His Messianic coming; any subsequent coming was to be spiritual and private. This view is borne out by the first Epistle, where twice we get the phrase "If he shall be manifested" (ii, 28; iii, 2), which looks like a concession to popular views; while the expectation of Anti-Christ is met by saying that those who deny the Father and Son are Anti-Christ (ii, 22; iv, 3), that is, there is no need to expect the coming of Anti-Christ: he is already present.

But, if the parousia in future glory has faded from the johannine scheme, what of the judgment? For that was expected to occur at the parousia. The writer would, I think, have answered: "That expectation was correct: the Messiah has come, and the judgment of the living has taken place and is taking place now". For there is very little to suggest a future great assize at least for the living. Undoubtedly the writer believed that the end of the world was at hand. The belief is not stressed, but is clearly indicated in the references to "the

last day." Then there was to be some sort of judgment, but usually it is conceived as dealing with those who have passed out of this life before the day comes (v, 25)—"The hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live . . . all they that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment". Those who have done the will of God are to be raised "at the last day" (vi, 40, 44, 54). Only in one place is it possible to suppose that it is the living whose judgment is postponed till then, (xii, 48) "He that rejecteth me hath one that judgeth him . . . the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day".

But in a far greater number of cases the judgment of the living is clearly conceived as taking place immediately with the coming of Christ into the world. Its form is not that which we usually picture; it is not the assigning of rewards and penalties, but rather the offering of a chance. That chance, to those who accept it, is God's greatest gift. And the judgment is not imposed by Christ; it is the acceptance or rejection by men of the gift offered by Christ: by their acceptance or rejection they as it were pass sentence on themselves. "He came unto his own and they that were his own received him not, but as many as received him, to

them gave he the right to become children of God" (i, 11). Again (iii, 19) "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light"; and (iii, 18) "He that believeth not hath been judged already". Jesus declares (ix, 39) "For judgment came I into this world"; and again (xii, 31) "Now is the judgment of this world".

The judgment, then, took place at the parousia, as was expected: but its form was the sifting of people by their attitude to Christ. Hardly ever is it suggested that Christ Himself as it were administered judgment. Possibly there is a hint of it (in v, 22): "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment to the Son"; and, a verse or two further on, (v, 27) "He gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man". Judgment, however, was not the primary object of His coming, but salvation. "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him" (iii, 17, 18), the exact opposite of the Jewish expectation. The idea is repeated in xii, 47, "I came not to judge the world but to save the world." This offer of salvation necessarily involved the judgment of those who rejected it, without active interference by Christ. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin" (xv, 22). In an-

other place He declares "I judge no man" (viii, 15). And again "If any man hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not" (xii, 47). And, He adds, "He that rejecteth me and keepeth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him in the last day"—And it is again, even at the end, the same test, the acceptance or non-acceptance of Christ and His teaching. The effect of the judgment is immediate: those who accept Christ at once receive the reward of eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (iii, 36). "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood (i.e. the believer) hath eternal life" (vi, 54). Eternal life is the highest goal of man, but it may be enjoyed even now by the believer, not, perhaps, in all its fulness, for Christ goes to prepare a place for them (xiv, 3), but it can be had at once. For "This is life eternal that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send" (xvii, 3); the fulness of that knowledge will no doubt only come hereafter; but it is in part a present possession, and it is not incompatible with ordinary physical death as we know it. For it is clearly said that some of those who believe will be raised at the last day for life (v, 29; vi, 40; vi, 44; vi, 54). Not all, however, apparently are to die; some will pass straight from this life to full life eternal (xi, 25, 26) "He that believeth on me though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall

never die". But for all those, whether they are to suffer physical death or not, eternal life is a present possession, though only partial. For them the judgment is over. They have believed and received the knowledge of God, which is life eternal. The same is the teaching of I John, iii, 14, and v, 12.

As for those who do not believe, plainly they have not now that life, and it appears that at the last day they shall be excluded from it "He that obeyeth not shall not see life" (iii, 36). But that is all. There is no hint anywhere of eternal punishment or torment inflicted on them as retribution or to work reform. They are simply excluded, and their exclusion appears to be permanent. (Compare I. John v, 16, 17, "There is a sin unto death"). There is no suggestion that hereafter they too may be saved. Like St. Paul, the writer is too greatly overjoyed with the certainty and blessedness of salvation to dwell in any fulness on the fate of those who miss their opportunity.

Such, in the main, is the doctrine of the judgment in the Fourth Gospel. For those who die before the last day, there is to be a resurrection, when men will enter on eternal life or not according as to whether or no they have accepted the word of Jesus. But the real judgment is not merely the distribution of rewards and penalties: it is going on *now* and there is nothing arbitrary or judicial about it. It is simply cause and effect. Those

who accept Christ inevitably receive that knowledge of God which is life eternal. The language is different from that of the synoptics, but the ideas are consistent with the conception of God which Jesus put forward. Throughout the Gospel, the outstanding characteristic of God is love. Constantly He is referred to as Father, and that not only in relation to Christ but to men as well. In iv, 23, He is simply "the Father"; and quite definitely, in xx, 17, "I go unto my Father and your Father". The Father himself loves the disciples (xvi, 27) so that there is no need for Christ to petition on their behalf. But His love is not only for the disciples—it is world wide; He so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son to save it. The idea—the old idea—of God as judge is explicitly excluded (v, 22) "Neither doth the Father judge any man". Only once is the wrath of God mentioned (iii, 36) and there its result is simply that the disobedient do not see life: it is the unalterable opposition of God to evil, not an active passion. Nay, the very judgment itself is only the result of God's love: it comes about because He offers to unworthy men the boon of eternal life—and some reject it.

Nor is there, in the Gospel at least, any suggestion that God needs to be propitiated, except perhaps in the words of the Baptist who regards Christ as the Lamb of God (i, 29; i, 36). Elsewhere,

the death of Christ *is* central; but it seems to be directed to working a change in men rather than in God. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (xii, 32). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (xv, 13). Caiaphas prophesied "that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God" (xi, 51). In the first epistle of John, on the other hand, there is a good deal which suggests that the work of Christ is propitiatory. He is "an advocate with the Father" (ii, 1); He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (ii, 2); our sins are forgiven "for his name's sake" (ii, 12). But even there, it is God who sent His Son to be the propitiation (iv, 10), and no book in the New Testament insists more strongly on the love of God. Whatever idea may underlie, in I. John, the notion of the propitiatory work of Christ, it is not, in the writer's mind, incompatible with a God of supreme love. And in the Gospel, there is, I think, no suggestion of propitiation, though over and over again the death is regarded as the means to our salvation.

Thus, in the Fourth Gospel and First Epistle of John, Christ's doctrine of the love of God is stressed. Compatibly with that doctrine, the judgment is conceived as the outcome of that love; it is never merely retributive, directed like legal justice to

maintain the balance of right and wrong. All that it does is to see that men receive that for which they are fitted, what is best for them. Those who are not suited to eternal life do not receive it; but it is no part of Fatherly love to give to children that for which they are not fitted. Nor is there any idea of an exact scrutiny of deeds before judgment is passed. As in St. Paul, those who are saved will, inevitably, do good in life: they will be obedient. But the essential consideration for the attainment of eternal life is not what men do but what they are: they must turn to Christ. The idea is the same as that which Paul expressed when he spoke of the new creature, and ultimately the same as what Christ meant by repentance. The love of God and remission of sins through repentance: that is the teaching no less of the Fourth Gospel than of Christ Himself. And in the Fourth Gospel the Judgment also is Fatherly, not "judicial", though the writer leaves us, as does also Christ Himself, with the possibility that in some cases the opposition between God and the sinner may not be overcome. But he does not, as also Christ, I think, did not, suggest that such sinners are to be punished eternally. Of their ultimate fate he says nothing. We can only conjecture of their treatment from what we know of God's love.

(B) Other New Testament Books.

With the other writings in the New Testament it is not necessary to deal at length, for they hardly add any new points for consideration.

The first Epistle of St. Peter is full of the idea of a judgment to come at the parousia, which is near at hand. "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (iv, 17); the wicked are to "give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead". The writer adds that Christ preached also to the dead that they too might be brought within the scope of the Judgment. When it comes, the judgment is to be for all, apparently starting with the Christians ("the house of God", iv, 17). And it is to be strictly according to works (i, 17) of which account is to be rendered (iv, 5). The death of Christ is regarded as a ransom; the righteous suffered for the unrighteous (iii, 18)—"his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree" (ii, 24). The point of view is very like that of Hebrews, without its Hellenistic dress. But there is nothing to say how the sacrifice is efficacious, nor is there any hint as to the spirit, reformatory or retributive, in which the judgment is to be carried out, except the statement that it is to begin with Christians. Presumably it is safe to assume that in their case it is reformatory but even that is not explicitly declared.

The Epistle of St. James also is full of the thought of the imminence of the judgment: for example, "behold, the judge standeth before the doors" (v, 9). The whole implication of the argument about faith and works is that judgment is to be by the latter, and the idea of a law to be fulfilled is strongly emphasised in the words "one only is the law-giver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy" (iv, 12). There is no mention in the epistle of the Cross or sacrifice of Jesus: the whole book suggests simply a coming judgment by works, without details as to the nature of that judgment. The Pastorals also look forward to the parousia as a time of judgment. The Epistle of St. Jude regards it as near at hand, to be executed on all, and as leading (for some at least) to eternal fire; while II. Peter stresses the nearness, the certainty, the terror of it.

All these shorter writings of the New Testament bear witness to the expectation of a parousia and of a judgment on rather legal lines. But they are not, on the whole, incompatible (except the eternal fire of Jude) with a Fatherly judgment such as the teaching of Christ would lead us to expect. It must, however, be conceded that judgship and righteousness rather than Fatherhood are the aspects of God which their treatment of the judgment suggests. On the other hand, there are hints that such views were already beginning to lose

their hold on some of the Christians. II. Peter iii, 3, 4 suggests that already some were beginning to doubt the second coming; and in II. Timothy ii, 18, those who say that the resurrection is past already are declared to have erred. And in any case, they practically all of them bear witness to the general belief in, or at least normal expression in words of, the Fatherhood of God alongside of their expectation of the judgment.

Throughout the New Testament, then, there is evidence (except perhaps in St. John) of the expectation of a second coming with which is to be associated some form of judgment. Both those expectations, if we may trust the synoptists, go back ultimately to the teaching of Christ, though His teaching was probably not very detailed. That there should be a judgment is not necessarily in the least incompatible with the Fatherhood of God. On the contrary, it may be the expression of it. Different men not only, as we say, deserve different treatment; they need it for their own good. And it is this latter fact which the teaching of Christ suggests will be God's main concern in the judgment; not the treating of men according to their deserts, but according to their needs. There is little to suggest, in His teaching, an exact scrutiny of the past or any attempt to vindicate the moral law. The evidence that Christ spoke of eternal punishment is of the slightest, but His sayings do

suggest remedial punishment, and they do also suggest, for some, annihilation, but not in any vindictive spirit. It is commonly supposed now that by destruction Christ meant eternal punishment; but that is a meaning read into His words from other New Testament books, notably Revelation and Hebrews, and read into them without sufficient justification; for such a doctrine seems to be opposed to the true Fatherhood of God. In the main, according to Christ, what God requires of men is repentance, and there are only two passages in the Synoptics, neither of them in Luke, which suggest that repentance alone is not sufficient to win forgiveness for sin.

Outside the Synoptics there is, if not a variety of views, at least a considerable difference of emphasis in the different books. The terrors of the judgment are prominently set forward in Hebrews and graphically described in Revelation. But the influence of Jewish modes of thought is obvious in both these books. They are instances—probably extreme ones—of what was practically inevitable: that the environment into which Christianity was born should affect the Christian message as it was delivered by some teachers. In spirit they seem to contradict, to a certain extent, what we know of our Lord's teaching; the judgment is to be terrible and the Fatherhood of God has almost disappeared in His righteous judgship. In so far as this is so,

we are bound to regard such differences from Christ's teaching as due to Judaism or other outside influence and not as an essential part of the Christian gospel. Probably, also, Jewish modes of thought were at work in other writers, e.g. James and I. Peter; though we cannot there check them so easily. What is really significant is the degree in which such Jewish modifications are either absent from or at least unstressed in the Synoptic Gospels (except St. Matthew), in the latter epistles of St. Paul, and in St. John.

No one would deny that of all the New Testament writers it is the last two, St. Paul and the writer we call St. John, who, outside the synoptists, have drunk most deeply of the spirit of Jesus and have done most to hand on the religion He founded. It would be merely foolish to try to compare the influence of the other writers with their influence. Both are full of the truth, taught by Jesus, of the love of God, and in both we can see how, when the significance of that love was grasped, it moulded their belief about the judgment. Both still believed that a point would come when there should be a judgment; that was intrinsically probable and a part of the tradition. But both also have got beyond the stage at which all stress is laid on the parousia and the judgment. To both in a sense the judgment is a thing of the past; salvation is a present reality, the enjoyment of the

divine love through repentance. There is no fear of future judgment for Christians, only confident hope of still deeper knowledge and enjoyment of the love of God. In both (as in the teaching of Christ) that love of God is central and dwarfs other thoughts; and there is little in St. Paul, at least later on, and nothing in St. John to suggest eternal torment. Each of them in one place indicates exclusion as the punishment of the unworthy, but no more.

Surely, then, it is these writers whose thought is so akin to that of Jesus, who have drunk so deep of His spirit, whom we ought to follow rather than those others who have not completely thrown aside the shackles of Jewish modes of thought. Judgment there will be; but it will be the expression not of mere justice but of the love of God and of Christ—of the Father who spared not His own Son and of the Son who faced death, “for us men and for our salvation”.



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